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THE

Letters

OF

JOSEPH RITSON, Esq.

EDITED CHIEFLY FROM ORIGINALS IN THE POSSESSION OF HIS NEPHEW.

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TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

BY SIR HARRIS NICOLAS, K.C.M.G.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
Infra se positas: extinctus amabitur idem.

HOR.

LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING.
1833.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE volumes contain a collection of the late Mr. Ritsons Letters, from an early part of his life to its close; comprising a period of nearly thirty years. The publication has been long delayed from various causes, but principally a regard to the feelings of some of the parties to whom the letters are addressed—now beyond the reach of praise or blame;—and a disinclination to obtrude on public notice the private and unimportant matters to which a few of them will appear to relate. The latter class, however, could not be omitted consistently with the editors anxious wish to exhibit the writers character and disposition to the world in a true light,—not misanthropic and unsocial, as too often represented, but singularly benevolent and urbane. To the attainment of this object every other consideration yielded; and the editor has gratefully to acknowledge that the favorable evidence in support of it, afforded by the letters themselves, is most ably enforced in the "Memoir" which precedes them.

Stockton upon Tees,
12th June, 1833.

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MEMOIR

OF

JOSEPH RITSON.

——— "dicere verum quid vetat."

Joseph Ritson was the second, but eldest son[1] that survived, of Joseph Ritson, of Stockton upon Tees, by his wife, Jane Gibson, and was born there on the 2nd of October, 1752. His family held lands, and ranked among the most respectable yeomanry at Hackthorpe and Great Strickland, in Westmoreland for four generations; but his pedi-

[1] His elder brother, Christopher, died an infant. The other children of Joseph Ritson and Jane Gibson, were John, Sarah, and Elizabeth, all of whom died young: Anne, who married Robert Frank, and was mother of Joseph Frank, esq. the editor of this collection of his uncles letters; Sarah, the wife of Mr. Jonathan Brown, of Liverpool; Jane, who married Mr. Thomas Thompson, of Great Strickland; and Mary.

gree cannot be traced with certainty beyond his great-grandfather, Christopher Ritson, who died in 1703.[1] The name of Ritson, which is considered a corruption or contraction of "Richardson,"[2] is of some antiquity in Westmoreland and Cumberland, and occurs in the parish register of Lowther at its commencement about the year 1550.

Ritsons first, and indeed only schoolmaster, was the rev. John Thompson, of Stockton, afterwards vicar of Warden, in Northumberland, who was accustomed to speak of him as one of his best scholars; and to relate some anecdotes indicative, even in his boyhood, of those mental eccentricities for which he was afterwards remarkable.[3] Being destined for the law, he was articled to Mr. Raisbeck, a solicitor of Stockton, son-in-law of an eminent corn-merchant of that place, of the name of Robinson, with whom Ritsons father had long been connected in business.[4] From Mr. Raisbecks office he was removed to that of Ralph Bradley, esq. a barrister, with the view of acquir-

[1] Pedigree in Ritsons autograph.

[2] "Richardson, Richison, Richson, Ricson, Ritson." Ritsons Memoranda.

[3] Memoirs of Ritson, in Brewsters *History of Stockton*, 8vo. 1829, p. 370.

[4] Ibid. See "Letters," No. II. vol. i. p. 5, note.

ing a knowledge of conveyancing; and it may be, inferred, that it was at Mr. Bradleys suggestion that he afterwards settled in London, because he is reported to have described young Ritsons abilities as too great to be wasted in such a place as Stockton.

It is not to be expected that much should be known of this period of Ritsons life. His professional occupations must have consumed great part of his time; and there is ample proof that all his leisure was devoted to antiquarian literature. The only productions of his pen before his arrival in the metropolis which have been preserved are some verses addressed to the Ladies of Stockton, and first printed in the Newcastle Miscellany in 1772; but they are no otherwise remarkable than for being his earliest literary effort. The singularity of his opinions, and his determination to judge on every subject for himself, were displayed in 1772, being then in his nineteenth year, in a very extraordinary manner. A perusal of Mandevilles *Fable of the Bees*, "induced," he says, in his *Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, which he published in 1802, "serious reflection and caused him firmly to adhere to a milk and vegetable diet, having at least never tasted, during the whole course of those thirty

years, a morsel of flesh, fish, or fowl, or anything to his knowledge prepared in or with those substances, or any extract thereof; unless on one occasion, when tempted by wet, cold, and hunger, in the south of Scotland, he ventured to eat a few potatoes dressed under the roast: nothing less repugnant, to his feelings, being to be had; or except by ignorance or imposition; unless, it may be, in eating eggs, which, however deprives no animal of life, though it may prevent some from coming into the world to be murdered and devoured by others."[1] That this resolution arose from a most refined sense of humanity cannot be doubted; for as will afterwards appear, one of the strongest traits in his character was kindness to animals.[2]

Towards the end of 1773 Ritson visited Edinburgh, and the diary of his journey is deserving of notice from its affording a specimen of the minute accuracy which characterized him. With Holyrood palace he was, he says, inexpressibly pleased, and the facility of access to the Advocates' library delighted him. It would seem

[1] Pp. 201, 202.

[2] Some interesting allusions to his sentiments on this subject, will also be found in his Correspondence. See particularly vol. i. pp. 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 47, 49.

that his antiquarian ardour made him forgetful of prudential considerations; for the note "Buy Tartans"[1] is immediately followed by "find I have not money left to pay my reckoning—am very much distressed—resolve to leave it on;" an awkward dilemma, into which perhaps other enthusiastic collectors besides himself have been seduced. A discussion on the Battle of Flodden during his return interested one of his fellow travellers, who relieved his pecuniary embarrassment; and the following reflection on his journey, with which his diary concludes, shews that he had paid dearly for the gratification of his curiosity in visiting the Scotish capital. "Friday, got my shoe mended; set off at eight, and after walking twelve hours, most of it in a heavy rain, arrived safe at home, after an absence of twelve days. The length of time I had been absent,

[1] These Tartans cost him 1*l.* 5*s.* 3*d.*; and among the items of his expences at Edinburgh are, "Paid for Treatise on Second Sight, 1*s.*; Book of Reels, 4*s.* 6*d.*; Pitscottie [Lindsay of Pitscotties Chronicles of Scotland] 2*s.* Ruddiman, 2*s.* 6*d.*; Moyses [Memoirs of Affairs of Scotland, 1577-1603,] 2*s.*; Scots Poems, 6*d.*; other books, 5*s.*" His diet on his tour appears to have been strictly Pythagorean; muffins, cake, bread and butter, cheese, milk, beer and ale. The total sum expended during the twelve days was 4*l.* 6*s.* 11½*d.*

the distance of my journey, and the vicissitudes of weather and pocket, the change of lodgings, and the many hardships I had experienced in my little tour, all contribute to make the time of my arrival at home the happiest moment of my life."

Among the friendships which he formed at Stockton were those with Mr. Shield, the well known composer; Thomas Holcroft, whose autobiography appeared in 1816; and with the unfortunate poet, Cunningham. With Shield his intimacy continued until his death, and several notes from him are preserved, one of which written in 1774, justifies the idea that Ritson was the author of a song which Shield set to music, and that he contributed others. Cunningham[1] be-

[1] See Ritsons Letters, vol. i. p. 144. Of Cunningham Ritson prefixed the following melancholy account to an edition of his Poems:

"Mr. Cunningham was of a very good family in Dublin; his parents, whom he left when young, a step he often repented, were Roman Catholics. He was a worthy honest man, and the contents of this volume sufficiently display his poetical genius and fertile invention. In the latter part of his life he addicted himself very much to drinking, particularly that unhealthiest of compounds, English geneva. He has often told me that he could not bear reflection; and thus, in order to avoid it, he impaired his faculties, acquired a loathsome disease, rendered his existence miserable, and finally, after a languishing ill-

longed to a theatrical company in the north of England: two of his letters to Ritson have es-

ness, added one more to the number of those deluded wretches who have fallen a sacrifice to the above detestable habit. What has often astonished me is, that in the earlier part of his life (as I have been told) he was remarkably sober, and supposed to save money; was a very desirable companion, and a very healthy man. Long before his death, however, he was reduced to great poverty, hardly subsisting on the pittance he received as a sharer in the company, and never able to purchase either clothes or linen. His table-talk was dull, tedious, and very often disagreeable; yet the man, who disgusted with his conversation, could at the same time, please with his letters or delight with his verses; though his extreme indolence commonly prevented him from doing either. He had been a performer in the Edinburgh theatre, and in some strolling company or other, from his first coming into England till within a few months of his death; but had belonged for a great many years to one of which Mr. Bates was manager, and which visited Shields, Sunderland, Durham, Stockton, Whitby, and Scarborough. He was unequalled in a Frenchman, but excelled perhaps in almost every other character; I remember him excellent in Orator Gruel. In Cawdells poems are some very pathetic lines addressed to him after Mr. Cunninghams retirement, if it may be so called, to Newcastle. The account of his death, which appeared in the Newcastle Chronicle, was written by Mrs. Slack, wife of the printer, at whose house he died; whose disinterested friendship and tender attention to this most ingenious and unhappy man were

caped the general destruction of his correspondence; and the latest of them will be read with some interest, as it was written in Cunningham's last illness, two months only before his death.

"To J. RITSON, Junior,

to the care of Mr. Barker, at the Black Dog, Custom-house Street, Stockton."

"Dear Sir,

Your letter gave me much satisfaction; your attention to me flattered my vanity, and your profusion of compliment made me ask my heart if I deserved it. The answer was *No!* Indolence, not want of friendship, has often prevented my being (to most of my acquaintance) a punctual correspondent. Your favouring me from a leisure hour with now and then a line, may be the means to remove that indolence, and restore me to something like a warmth of friendly connection.

You think (I am convinced) of your epistolary merit with something like injustice. I beg to

as meritorious as instances of such a nature are uncommon. J. R."

Cunningham was born in 1729, and died at Newcastle 18th September, 1773, aged 44.

have many proofs of it, and though I cannot pretend to be a judge, your manner, I am sure, will always give me pleasure.

I should have wrote before, but was not very well; I stumbled on a pair of stairs in an hurry going to rehearsal, and hurt my side pretty severely, but am better. Our business here does not answer entirely to the hopes we had encouraged, but 'tis likely 'twill mend.

Remember me, with best esteem, to the two young gentlemen at Mr. Moats, and believe me, with real regard, your friend and servant,

JN. CUNNINGHAM."

Darlington, 19th June, 1772."

"There are carts come every day to our town with lead from Stockton, by that conveyance I shall hope to hear from you. Direct to Mrs. Dawson's, Milliner, in the Market-place, where the carts unload. I write a miserable scrawl, but I know you'll excuse me."

"Mr. RITSON,

Attorney, at Stockton."

"Dear Sir,

Added to my natural indolence, I have been severely afflicted with illness since I saw you; so don't be displeased with me for not replying to your agreeable favour sooner. I am retired till my health either seems to return, or totally abandons me, to an hospital house (by invitation) that is to Mr. Slacks, the printer, at Newcastle. I have the best of medical advice and sometimes have a gleam of hope that I shall once more see you. You now have my address for a letter, but I have another address, in which I hope you will give me credit for sincerity—that is, that I am a friend that esteems you.

J. CUNNINGHAM.

Newcastle, July 23rd, 1773."

In 1775 Ritson settled in London, having engaged to manage the conveyancing department of Messrs. Masterman and Lloyds office, in Grays-Inn, at a salary of £150. a year, and he for some time lived in chambers with a gentleman of the name of Robinson.[1] From this period considerable

[1] In 1780 he removed to No. 8, Holborn Court, where he continued until his decease.

light is thrown on his pursuits, talents, and character, by his correspondence, to which occasional reference will be made in this memoir. The first of these letters, which is dated at Grays-Inn on the 26th August, 1776, exhibits Ritson as a reader of the antiquarian manuscripts in the British Museum, and aiding Mr. Allan in collecting materials for a History of Sherburn Hospital, in Durham; but it is the next letter in the series to which reference is made with the greatest satisfaction. It was addressed to his father, in March 1777, who was then in a very infirm state of health, and proves that Ritson was capable of feeling the warmest filial gratitude and affection.[1] This effusion is however by no means a solitary one: the whole tenor of his correspondence with his family indicates great kindness and benevolence,[2] and is sufficient to excite shame in those who, from malignancy or ignorance, have represented him as a stranger to the best feelings of the human heart. "Heaven knows," he says to his father, "how much I have all along pleased myself with thinking I should be able

[1] Vol. i. p. 3.

[2] See especially his Letters, vol. i. pp. 46, 49, 50, 73, 74, 78, 96; and on the death of his sister, in April, 1793, vol. ii. pp. 6, 12, 13, 14.

in a few years to render you some assistance towards making you easy and happy in your old age, in return for the education and indulgence you bestowed on me in my youth. My heart bleeds to think of the distressed situation the whole family is in. I would to god I could be with you for a day—but alas! I should only add to your confusion. May heaven assist you with patience and resignation in your afflictions. I crave your blessing, and earnestly commend myself to your remembrance, hoping withal many a year after this to put you in mind of, dear father, your very affectionate son." [1]

His father did not long survive, and in November 1780, he also lost his mother;[2] his letters to whom during her last illness, are equally affectionate—"I have so few, and those such slender connections with mankind," he told her, "that if we lose you I shall not be very uneasy at any thing that may happen to me." [3] To her request to learn his wishes respecting the disposition of her little property, he disinterestedly replied, "it is very much my wish that you should dispose of every thing you have to leave in favour of Nanny, [his sister] and her

[1] Letters, vol. i. p. 5. [2] Ibid. p. 19. [3] Ibid. p. 12.

child."[1] His last letters to her contained an account of the riots in London, with the motives of which he seems to have sympathized, for he speaks of the "scoundrel ministry of the day" as having been "long and deservedly objects of public detestation."[2]

During the year 1778 he printed on a broadside "Tables, shewing the descent of the Crown of England," of which a second impression, with various alterations, was published in 1783. This work is valuable, from the accuracy and research displayed in its compilation; and it is also deserving of attention from its proving that Ritson was, at that time a firm Jacobite. His political sentiments are most strongly developed in the preface to the first edition, which was never published, perhaps from considerations of prudence, and it explains the principle upon which his opinions were founded. The first Table contains what he terms "the true hereditary succession of the English Crown, from Egbert, the first Saxon monarch, to James the sixth of Scotland." The second Table shews "the true hereditary succession from William the Conqueror, supposing a title in him by conquest;" in which are included Robert Duke of Normandy, the eldest son of the Con-

[1] Letters, vol. i. p. 12. [2] Ibid. p. 16.

queror, the Empress Maud, Arthur Duke of Brittany, and his sister Eleanor, Edward Mortimer Earl of March, Richard Duke of York, father of Edward the fourth, Elizabeth of York; and he omits William the second, Stephen, Henry the second, John, Henry the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh, and ends with the young Pretender, whom he styles Charles the third. The third Table is entitled "the de facto succession from Edward Ironside," which is only remarkable for the notes appended to some of the names, and for its including Lady Jane Grey. The word "usurper" is applied with great freedom, and sometimes without truth; but it escaped Ritsons critical acumen that his favourite, James the first of England, "than whom," he says, "no sovereign could perhaps ever boast so many and such excellent titles to his dominions," was *de jure* as much an usurper as either of those on whom he bestows the designation, until the previous legislative enactments relative to the succession were repealed, and his right recognized and established by act of Parliament—a period of nine months.[1]

In October, 1779, Ritsons anxiety to explore

[1] See a note to the *Literary Remains of Lady Jane Grey*, pp. cxxv—cxlviii.

the literary treasures of the Bodleian, induced him to visit Oxford.[1] The diary of his journey, which appears to have been a pedestrian one, is no otherwise curious than as presenting the first evidence which has been discovered of his sceptical opinions. About this time he contributed an article on some records connected with the county of Durham, to Goughs *British Topography*;[2] and he meditated a Villare of the Palatinate, in which he states himself to have made some progress.[3] It was in this year that his correspondence began with his nephew, then a child,[4] to whose exemplary zeal for his uncles reputation, the world is indebted for the present work. Ritsons letters to his young protegé, with the exception of striving to render him a convert to his opinions on religion, and on the impropriety of eating animal food,[5] are full of sound sense and useful admonitions,[6] combined with a kindness almost parental. Among his instructions is an earnest request that he would learn to play on some musical instrument,[7] "if it were but a bird-call

[1] Letters, vol. i. 8. [2] Ibid. p. 7. [3] Ibid. p. 9.
[4] Ibid. p. 10. [5] Ibid. p. 39, 40, 41.
[6] See particularly his Letters, vol. i. pp. 21, 29, 64, 97.
[7] Letters, vol. i. p. 20.

or a guse-thropple;"[1] thus proving that Ritsons soul, however rugged it may have been supposed by partial observers, was far from insensible to those charms which are said to be attractive only to minds of great delicacy and softness.

As early as 1780,[2] if not before, Ritson commenced practising for himself as a conveyancer, and in November in that year he told his friend, Mr. Allan, that he had left Mr. Lloyd, and begun a little drawing business for himself, and that he intended devoting his spare hours to the Villare of Durham.[3] In December 1781, Ritson printed a little satirical Tract, now of great rarity, called "the Stockton Jubilee, or Shakspeare in his Glory," which consists of extracts from Shakespeare, applied to most of the principal inhabitants of that town, descriptive of their several cha-

[1] Letters, vol. i. pp. 23, 61.

[2] In this year, Mr. Haslewood, (*Life*, p. 5,) states that Ritson edited the second edition of the Odes of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams; and though the statement is said to stand upon Ritsons "own avowal to an intimate acquaintance," [query, Mr. Park?] it is denied by his nephew and executor; and is rendered extremely unlikely by the disgust which Ritson always expressed at licentious poetry.

[3] Letters, I. 46.

racters. With what justice these passages were applied, or from what motive the work was circulated it would be useless now to inquire. Ritson concealed that he was the compiler from all his friends excepting Mr. Ralph Hoar, to whom he intrusted the delivery of various copies to the Newcastle Post Office; and in a letter to Mr. Wadeson, in January 1782, Ritson speaks jocosely of the tract as the production of "a most impudent and malicious rascal," and asks if the "scoundrel" has been detected.[1] From another passage in that letter, it appears however that suspicion of his being the author, had rendered him unpopular at Stockton.

Towards the end of July, 1782, Ritson passed a few weeks at Cambridge, where, he says, "he saw a great many curious books, made a great many important discoveries, and what is better than all, became intimately acquainted with Dr. Farmer," whom he designates "a most sensible, liberal, benevolent, and worthy man."[2] His correspondence about this time shews that he was fully engaged in his favourite pursuits, and had just completed what he termed his "scurrilous

[1] Letters, vol. i. p. 37.

[2] Ibid. p. 57.

libel upon Warton."[1] That work appeared in the autumn of the same year; and soon afterwards he sent his "attack" upon Johnson and Steevens to press, in reference to which he jocularly remarked to a friend, "I will turn the world upside down."[2] Ritsons *Observations on the History of English Poetry*, were addressed "in a Familiar Letter to the Author," and though published anonymously, the writer did not attempt concealment. The bold and occasionally rude style of his language, the severity of his criticisms, and in some places the needless personal taunts in which he indulged, created, as might be expected, a host of enemies, who if they admitted the force and justice of many of his observations, or the erudition and research which his tract displays, had not the candour to ascribe its appearance to the true motive. It was in vain that Ritson asserted he had "no other object in view, no other end to answer, than truth and justice;" that "he could not possibly have been influenced by personal motives;" or that "he utterly disavowed them." Warton deservedly held a high place in public esteem, and was supported by numerous literary friends, whose veneration and respect rendered them deaf to facts or arguments. Against a party resolved to believe

[1] Letters, vol. i. pp. 58, 61. [2] Ibid. p. 61.

in the infallibility of its idol, it is hopeless to contend: they will either not read what is written, or pretend to disbelieve the charges; and if pressed too hard by evidence, another resource remains to them,—they impugn the motives of the assailant; and all appeals to reason and justice are lost in the war-yhoop which they raise against his "scurrility," or his "personalities." It is not attempted to be denied that Ritsons comments on Warton are occasionally coarse and intemperate; but almost every controversy of his time, and more especially of his predecessors, is equally remarkable for virulence. Even some modern reviewers exhibit quite as much bitterness and personality; and though the style be more polished and the author unknown, a wound is not less painful because the instrument is keen, or because it is inflicted by a secret assassin, instead of being received from an avowed enemy. Ritsons detractors have not detected any personal cause for malignity towards Warton; and if his reverence for accuracy and truth excited greater indignation than is usually caused by plagiarisms and mistatements, the error has a "leaning to virtues side," which ought to have a very extenuating effect. These remarks apply to all Ritsons controversial writings: Truth—simple majestic Truth—was the goddess

whom he worshipped. He invested her with a holiness and a purity which made him consider any infringement of her sanctuary one of the weightiest crimes of which a human being could be guilty; and in the departments of literature to which he was attached, he appears to have deemed himself the self-created guardian of her temple. This feeling was naturally accompanied by the greatest candour on his own part. Whatever was the impression of his mind, it was described in the language most capable of preventing misconception; and it is not surprising that in a refined state of society, slight sympathy should exist for so romantic a veneration for truth; that his assailants could not believe in a purity of motives which they were incapable of imitating; or that the habit of calling things by their right names, should give offence. Literary forgeries were in his opinion no less criminal than commercial frauds; and it is only to a mind sophisticated by association with the world that the difference will appear so immense as to justify the one being visited with a halter, and the other being considered, if not meritorious, at least far from criminal. Without partaking of all Ritson's abhorrence of the system which prevailed in his day of forging ancient poems, and of publishing inter-

polated and garbled editions of early writers, his present biographer confesses that his sentiments differ in degree only from those of Ritson. The man who defrauds another of a few pounds by imitating his signature is consigned to an ignominious death, because property and reputation only are protected by the law: but society is equally injured by a fraud that may mislead thousands on subjects which have always been considered worthy of respect,—the early history, language, and political condition of our country. It is by contemporaneous documents alone that any of these points can be properly illustrated; and a word, or expression, or date, to take the slightest example of the effect of this practice, whether in prose or poetry, may become a standard authority. Bishop Percys interpolations were not only mischievous in this respect, but they were calculated to create an erroneous estimate of the refinement of our ancestors at the period in which the poems printed by him were written. If the simulated article relate to history or biography, and the production be not denounced by writers interested in the veracity of our annals, the land-marks of historic truth will be broken down, and history must degenerate into mere fable or romance. For the manufacturers of antiqui-

ties who impose upon our credulous countrymen in Italy and Greece with spurious medals, no indulgence is felt; and scarcely one of those who desire to rescue the literary forgers with whom Ritson warred from his iron fangs, would lift a finger to save these foreign plunderers from a horse-pond. Any other distinction than that the literary may produce greater mischief than the numismatic fraud, is left for the discovery of more subtle minds. Ritson felt the full force of these reflections, and to his latest hour fulminated his anathemas against violators of his shrine, whether laymen or divines, with a vigour, a consistency, and a courage, which have materially benefited literature.

The Observations on the History of English Poetry at once established Ritsons power as a formidable critic, and involved him in a controversy, the arena of which was the *Gentleman's Magazine*, where various letters appeared from the rev. Thomas Russell, of New College,[1] and the rev. J. Bowle on the one side, and from Ritson

[1] Russell was the fellow collegian of Warton, and wrote a volume of Sonnets. Mr. Bowle edited an edition of *Don Quixote*, in Spanish, for which he experienced a similar attack from Baretti, under the title of "Tolondron." Haslewoods *Life of Ritson*, p. 7.

and his friend Mr. Baynes,[1] on the other. It has been said that Ritson, influenced by the reasoning of Mr. Park, not only acknowledged the impropriety of his comments on Warton, but was induced at a later period to buy up and destroy all the copies that could be obtained.[2] This passage, like some others in the work alluded to, is one of those needless attempts to extenuate the conduct of the subject of this memoir, which sprung from an amiable motive, but by which neither he nor the public are benefited, because they happen to be without foundation. The individual who had the best means of information respecting Ritson—his kinsman and executor—denies the truth of the statement; and it is no compliment to Ritsons memory to deprecate the censure which any act of his life may excite, at the sacrifice of that principle which was the leading trait in his character.

In the same year, 1783, Ritson published an octavo volume, entitled, " Remarks, critical and

[1] Of this gentleman, whose name frequently occurs in this Memoir, an account will be found in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes of the 18th Century*, vol. viii. p. 113-115.

[2] Haslewoods *Life of Ritson*, p. 7. In the Preface to Mr. Parks edition of Ritsons *Select Collection of English Songs*, that gentleman says he once heard Ritson express regret for his treatment of Warton.

illustrative, on the text of the last[1] edition of Shakspeare." Though the objection of unnecessary asperity applies to this work, it has never been doubted that it proves the authors intimate knowledge of the poet, and the incapacity of his editors for the task they undertook. Of all writers Shakespeare was Ritsons favourite, and his veneration partook of the enthusiasm of his temperament. He was therefore not likely to view with complacency another imperfect edition, more especially as he intended to publish an edition himself;[2] but his anger was chiefly kindled by the false pretensions of the editors, and as this was a violation of truth, approaching to a literary fraud, he did not hesitate to expose the fallacy. In his preface, which is remarkably well written after stating that "the chief and fundamental business of an editor is carefully to collate the original and authentic editions of his author; that it is otherwise impossible for him to be certain that he is giving the genuine text, because he does not know what that text is;" that though "there had been no less than

[1] Johnson and Steevens's edition in 1778. A second edition by Reed appeared in 1785 in ten volumes.

[2] Letter to Mr. Rowntree, dated November, 1782, vol. i. p. 63. One sheet of the proposed edition was actually printed.

eight professed editors of Shakspeare, yet the old copies had never been collated by any one of them, and yet not one of the eight but has taken the credit of, or actually asserted his having collated them;" and that "the falsehood of these pretensions prior to Dr. Johnson, is sufficiently apparent in the margin of the edition" under his notice, he proceeds, "Surely men who thus proudly expose, and severely reprobate the crimes of their neighbours, should effectually guard theirselves against similar accusations. 'I,' says, Dr. Johnson, 'collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more: I collated all (the folios) at the beginning, but afterwards used only the first.' He must be very hardy indeed that dares give a flat contradiction to such positive assertions as these from so respectable a character. But the cause of Shakspeare and truth obliges one to say that the learned writer is certainly mistaken. The text of his own edition, the notes of Mr. Steevens, and, in some respect, the remarks in the following sheets, will prove that he never collated any one of the folios,—no not for a single play,—or at least that of his collations he has made little or no use. That he picked out a reading here and there from the old editions is true; all

his predecessors did the same; but this is not collation. So much for Dr. Johnson."

"With regard to the last edition Mr. Steevens explicitly tells us, that 'it has been constantly compared with the most authentic copies, whether collation was absolutely necessary to the sense or not.' 'Would not any one, from this declaration,' to use the ingenious critics own words, 'suppose that he had at least compared the folios with each other?' But he has been deceived, no doubt, by the person employed in this laborious but necessary work. What an abuse of that confidence and credit which the public naturally place in an editor of rank and character, to tell them that 'by a diligent collation of all the old copies hitherto discovered, and the judicious restoration of ancient readings, the text of this author seems now finally settled'! To what better cause can we ascribe such unfounded assertions than to indolence and temerity? Since, had the ingenious writer compared the old and present editions through a single play, he must necessarily have perceived that all the old copies had not been diligently collated, that ancient readings had not been judiciously restored, and that the text is no more finally settled at present than it was in the time of Theobald, Hanmer, and War-

burton; nay, that it is at large in the same state of inaccuracy and corruption in which it was left by Mr. Rowe."

If these charges be correct, and a perusal of the volume is likely to bring conviction of their justice, the public must be considered very much indebted to Ritson for the exposition. Next to the production of a perfect work, is the value of one pointing out the unfounded pretension of a book assuming to itself such a character. It may be difficult to form a complete chart of a particular line of coast, but if one is placed in the hands of the mariner pretending to be an infallible guide, which, in fact, is full of errors, the detection of the imposture is a real service to the community, more especially if besides the exposure of mistakes, much valuable original information be supplied. Some hypercriticism may be found among Ritsons remarks; but the felicity of many of his conjectures, his deep research, and his intimate acquaintance with the poet render the volume of great value, and entitle him if not to the very first, to a conspicuous place among his illustrators. The "peevish vein"[1] in which this work is said to be written is best extenuated in Ritsons own words:

[1] Haslewoods *Life of Ritson*, p. 7.

and if those whom he attacked set him the example of assailing their predecessors with similar weapons, sympathy for the suffering which he inflicted seems wholly misplaced. "The freedom with which every editor has treated his predecessors precludes the necessity of an apology for the liberties taken in the ensuing pages, with the sentiments of some of our most eminent literary characters. The superiority of a commentators rank, however, does not entitle his blunders to respect. It were to be wished that Dr. Johnson had shewn somewhat less partiality to 'pride of place;' for, though he professes to have treated his predecessors with candour, Theobald, the best of Shakspeares editors, experiences as much scurrility and injustice at his hands as Hanmer and Warburton, the worst of them, do deference and respect. For this, however, the learned critic might have his private reasons, which, as they could scarely have justified his conduct, he did right to conceal.

"To controvert the opinions, or disprove the assertions of Mr. Steevens, Dr. Farmer, and Mr. Tyrwhitt, men no less remarkable for their learning than for their obliging dispositions and amiable manners, has been a painful and odious task. But wherever the writer has been under the neces-

sity of differing from any of these gentlemen either in point of opinion or in point of fact, he will not be found to have expressed hisself in a manner inconsistent with a due sense of obligations and the profoundest respect. Such, at least, was his intention, such has been his endeavour, and such is his hope."

The "Remarks" produced a correspondence in the *St. James's Chronicle* for June 1783, between a writer signing himself "Alciphron," conjectured to be Steevens himself, and Ritson, who wrote under the signature of "Justice."[1] Ritsons political and other peculiar opinions, may occasionally be traced in the criticisms in his "Remarks:" Thus, he denounced in unmeasured language, the absurdity of the law respecting suicides, in commenting upon a passage in "Twelfth Night:"[2] The injustice of setting aside the lineal heir to the crown of England is insisted upon in notes on King John[3] and Henry the sixth;[4] whilst observations dictated by his religious tenets, may be observed in a few other places.[5] From the latter cause may have arisen his discovery of this peculiar excellence of Shakespeare,—that his writings

[1] Haslewoods *Life of Ritson*, p. 8. [2] "Remarks," p. 66.
[3] "Remarks," p. 84. [4] Ibid. p. 124. See also p. 188.
[5] Ibid. pp. 93, 173, 188.

are not imbued with the superstitious prejudices of his age. "No author," says Ritson, "ancient or modern, ever sacrificed less to the reigning superstition of the time than hisself;" and he eloquently adds, "whatever may be the temporary religion, Popish or Protestant, Paganism or Christianity, if its professors have the slightest regard for genius or virtue, Shakspeare, the poet of nature, addicted to no system of bigotry, will always be a favourite."[1]

Notwithstanding that Ritsons name is not mentioned by Boswell, there can be little doubt that he was personally known to Dr. Johnson; for a note exists from Davies, the bookseller, to Ritson, stating that Johnson would be glad to see him on the following day, or on the ensuing Friday; and that he, Davies, would be happy to wait on him if convenient, probably to introduce them. The date of this note does not occur, so that it is uncertain whether it preceded, or was subsequent to, the publication of the "Remarks."

The year 1783 was one of the most prolific of Ritsons pen. Besides an edition of "Gammer Gurtons Garland, or the Nursery Parnassus,"[2] containing nursery rhymes, a favourite little work

[1] "Remarks," p. 188.

[2] Printed at Stockton.

with those for whose amusement it was written, which has been frequently reprinted, he published a "Select Collection of English Songs, in three volumes, to which was prefixed an Historical Essay, on the Origin and Progress of National Song." His motive for this publication, of which the merits are very generally admitted, was he says, "to exhibit all the most admired and intrinsically excellent specimens of Lyric Poetry in the English Language at one view; to promote real instructive entertainment; to satisfy the critical taste of the judicious; to indulge the noble feelings of the pensive; and to afford innocent mirth to the gay."

All former collections of the kind he considered liable to objection, from the miscellaneous and often improper nature of their contents, for though each volume might contain one or two good songs, it was impossible to purchase many works with the view of obtaining so small a proportion of valuable matter. "Every one," he pertinently observes, "who wishes to possess a pearl, is not content to seek it in an ocean of mud." Ritson boasts, with very creditable vanity, that he has shewn the "utmost care, the most scrupulous anxiety, to exclude every composition, however celebrated or however excellent, of which the

slightest expression, or the most distant allusion, could have tinged the cheek of delicacy, or offended the purity of the chastest ear. This abomination, so grossly perceptible in almost every preceding collection, and even where editors have disclaimed its countenance, or professed its removal, is here, it may be safely averred, for the first time reformed altogether." A former editor, a gentleman of taste and sentiment," he adds, "has termed an execution of his duty in this respect a 'disagreeable piece of severity:' the present editor, however, far from having experienced any pangs of remorse on the occasion, wishes he could have had reason to glory in being the instrument of destruction to the whole species of those insidious and infernal productions."

Ritson alluded in his preface to the Reliques of Ancient Poetry edited by Bishop Percy, which he says were printed in an inaccurate and sophisticated manner. In a note he proves the justice of the remark by stating that wherever he followed the Bishops authorities he found him unfaithful and incorrect; and adds, "that the work is beautiful, elegant, and ingenious, it would be ridiculous to deny; but they who look into it to be acquainted with the state of ancient poetry, will be miserably disappointed or fatally misled. Forgery and im-

imposition of every kind ought to be universally execrated, and never more than when they are employed by persons high in rank and character, and those very circumstances are made use of to sanctify the deceit." But it was not against the literary violators of his editorial canon only that Ritson breathed vengeance. Similar liberties with ancient tunes are denounced with equal indignation; and Dr. Arne and Mr. Jackson, two musical composers of eminence, share his castigatory admonitions with Bishop Percy. "Several of the most eminent musical composers," he says, "have frequently indulged themselves in great and unwarrantable liberties with the poetry they have set; among these, none has offended more than the late Dr. Arne, whose own professional excellence might have better taught him the respect due to that of another; and Mr. Jackson of Exeter, who has even gone so far as to prefix to one of his publications a formal defence of the freedoms he has exercised upon the unfortunate bards who have fallen into his clutches: it is well known, however, that this ingenious gentleman has increased neither his moral nor his scientific character by such reprehensible and illiberal practices."

In his dislike to altering original tunes, he was countenanced by the correct taste of his friend Shield, who in one of his notes to Ritson said, "I feel very differently from many of my brother professors; for although practice must improve my harmonical knowledge, it does not lessen the value of a simple national melody, which I hope will ever be admired by every sensible mind."

Ritsons Historical Essay on National Song,[1] displays considerable erudition and unwearied research. It is deserving of attention that the essay contains a high compliment to Bishop Percy; but this is not a solitary instance of the kind, for notwithstanding that Ritson always expressed himself with severity at the manner in which the

[1] It has been said, and is repeated by Mr. Haslewood, (*Life*, p. 9.) that Ritson was materially assisted in this Essay by his friend Baynes; but he always indignantly denied the truth of the remark. In a M.S. note by Ritson on the song from Athenæus, *(Historical Essay*, p. 9.)

"Quaff with me the purple wine," &c.

he observed, "for this and all the other original poetry in the present Essay, the editor was indebted to his most learned, and most ingenious friend, the late John Baynes, esq., whose untimely and lamented death has left him at liberty to disclose a circumstance which, by his own desire, was to have been an entire secret."

Reliques were interpolated, he seems to have sought opportunities for rendering just homage to the talents and elegant accomplishments of the amiable prelate. The English Songs were reprinted in 1813, by Mr. Park, and it is remarkable that the editor should avail himself of that occasion not only to censure Ritsons conduct towards Warton and Percy, but to speak of him with unkindness and injustice. To say the least, a new edition of a deceased authors work does not appear the most graceful or fitting place for his editor to assail his memory; and the candour of the disavowal of any desire to "scatter the seeds of aconite where the willow and the cypress overshade" cannot escape suspicion, when no other seeds or shrubs are to be discovered, in relation to Ritson, though laurels and bays are offered to his opponents. As Mr. Park has never fulfilled his intention of becoming the "editorial advocate" of Warton, there are no means of judging of his success in "rebutting a regular indictment comprising seventeen counts, against the veracity of our poetical historian;" The editor of the last edition of the "*History of English Poetry*" adopted the greater part of Ritsons observations; though he thought proper to indulge in a philippic against his religious sentiments and private habits, which

produced a well merited castigation from an able writer in the Gentlemans Magazine.[1]

Ritsons only production in 1784 was a little tract, called the "Bishopric Garland, or Durham Minstrel," a collection of local songs, of little merit, and of slight interest, excepting to provincial antiquaries,—a description which applies to the other tracts of a similar nature printed by him.[2] About this period he was appointed High Bailiff of the Liberty of the Savoy; and in a letter to his sister, dated 16th March, 1784, he says "I shall enter upon my office at May-day: I expect it will bring me in about £150. a year. It is a place under the crown, and I hope I shall be able to secure it for life."[3] His hopes were soon after realized, as his patent of that office was granted on the 25th January, 1786. This situation, for which he is said to have been indebted to the influence of his friend William Masterman, Esq. M. P. probably induced him to resolve on being called to the bar, as he entered

[1] Signed "Quoad hoc Ritsonianus," (Frederick Madden, Esq. K. H.) June, 1825, vol. xcv. part i. pp. 486-488.

[2] These tracts are as follow: "the Yorkshire Garland," 1788; "The North Country Chorister," printed in 1792, and again in 1802; and "The Northumberland Garland, or Newcastle Nightingale," 1793.

[3] Letters, vol. i. 86.

into Commons in Grays Inn for that purpose in Easter Term, 1784. During the ensuing four years he seems to have devoted himself mainly to his profession, as the only work he printed was a compilation of Apophthegms, Maxims, and Precepts, selected from the ancients, which he called "The Spartan Manual, or Tablet of Morality,"[1] a tract admirably calculated for the object for which he designed it—"the improvement of youth, and the promoting of wisdom and virtue."

Ritsons correspondence between 1783 and 1788, which will well repay perusal, is often extremely characteristic. His Letters were principally addressed to his friends Mr. Rowntree and Mr. Wadeson, of Stockton, Mr. Harrison, of Durham, to his sister and nephew, and to lieutenant Hoar, of the 52nd regiment, then in India. A tone of sarcasm which is rather playful than malignant is every where apparent; and evidence of the idiosyncracy of the writers understanding may occasionally be detected. His sisters illness in 1784, occasioned him considerable anxiety; and his expressions on the subject, particularly in relation to her child, whom he adopted as his own, are irrefragable evidence of the excellence of his heart. In July, 1785, he took his nephew under

[1] 12mo. 1785.

his immediate protection, with the intention of teaching him his own profession, and the advice which he gave him before leaving his mother is not a little amusing.[1]

One of the most interesting letters connected with Ritsons literary career was written to Mr. Isaac Reed, in January 1786, in consequence of three notes disrespectful to Ritson in a new edition of Johnson and Steevens's Shakespeare[2], which he attributed to Reeds pen. Previously to this circumstance he was on friendly terms with Reed, who wrote to him on hearing that he had taken offence at these notes, disclaiming any intention of displeasing him. This explanation softened Ritsons anger; and he accepted Reeds offer to refer the subject to a common friend, by naming Mr. Baynes as arbitrator between them. Whilst Ritson admitted in the fullest manner the right of any person to controvert his opinions, or to correct his errors, "a liberty which," he says, "no one perhaps has made a greater use than himself," he justly contended for a difference between "information and attack;" and adds with some humour, "far from being offended, you say, with any person who should acquaint you that you had

[1] See his Letters, vol. i. pp. 104, 105.

[2] The edition of 1785. See page 24, note i. antea.

a hole in your stocking or some dirt on your face, you would think yourself much obliged to him; and so should I, but not if he accompanied the information with a kick on the shin or a box on the ear." To Reeds inserting the notes of Tyrwhitt and Malone, he made no objection: "they had," he observes, "received some provocation, and if they have advanced any thing I dislike I can find a speedier method of being even with them than that you are so obliging as to point out. And do you seriously think that after being gibbeted for eight or ten years in the margin of your edition, it is a sufficient compensation that I stand a chance of obtaining a reversal of my sentence from your successor? No, no, e'en let me hang on." The concern which this circumstance occasioned him is strikingly shewn in the concluding paragraph of this letter. "I shall dwell no longer on a subject which I would have given one of my fingers had never existed, and which for my own sake I shall endeavour as soon as possible to forget." [1]

Towards the end of that year he made a pedestrian tour into the north of Scotland, which he thus describes in an amusing poetical epistle to his friend Hoar, dated on New Years Day, 1787:

[1] Letters, vol. i. 105-108.

" Twill seem, I fancy, from this prate,
That I've to Stockton been of late.
'Tis true, I have; nor there alone,
I've through the North of Scotland gone;
For Inverness I did embark,
And sail'd from London in the dark;
Some eight days after landed sound,
And travelled over Scotish ground
Full many a weary mile, I trow,
For chiefly I on foot did go;
Tir'd, hungry—nay, without a shirt
To change what was as black as dirt;
Though once to make me spruce next day,
'Twas wash'd while I in cuerpo lay."

Whilst adverting to this letter, justice as well to Ritsons heart as to his muse, of which this appears to be the best effort that has been preserved, requires that another extract should be introduced:

" This many a year I have not made
Two lines of verse, though once my trade
You know it was—No, you can't tell,
But I can yet remember well.
When care was to my youth unknown,
My fancy free, my hours my own,
I lov'd i' th' laureat grove to stray,
The path was pleasant, prospect gay;

But now my genius sinks, nor knows
To make a couplet tink i'th' close.
No more of that—nor much of this—
I hasten fast to my *Finis*—
The poets end—the end of all—
But ere that fate me hence does call,
Shall we not meet, shall we not quaff,
And once more have an honest laugh?"[1]

He returned through Westmoreland, and stopped at his native town, which he again visited in October in the following year.[2] Early in January 1788, he said he was "considering of a trip to Paris or Madrid, being ashamed to have lived so long in the world, and seen so little of it,"[3] but he did not then go to the Continent; and in the autumn went to Stockton,[4] taking, it appears, Dublin in his route, with the view of collecting songs, the native production of the country; but he met with little or nothing except disappointment.[5] In August, 1787, he lost his intimate friend Mr. Baynes, to whom a congeniality of tastes and pursuits had closely bound him. As a testimony of regard Baynes bequeathed to him his valuable collection of old Romances, which Ritson placed

[1] Letters, vol. i. p. 121, 123. [2] Ibid. p. 121, 125.
[3] Ibid. p. 133. [4] Ibid. p. 138. [5] Ibid. 142, 143, 146, 147.

in a case, in his library, with a Latin inscription commemorative of his esteem and regret for the donor.[1]

The additional notes to the second edition of Johnson and Steevens's Shakspeare, which were the subject of Ritsons letter to Reed in January 1786, having given the Critical Review an opportunity of attacking Ritson, a deadly feud commenced between that journal and himself; and induced him in 1788, to print a defence,[2] entitled,

[1] Letters, vol. i. 133.

[2] "The design of the "*Quip Modest*," says Mr. Haslewood, "was in part to justify some of the notes before given in the *Critical Remarks*, which had been cited and commentated upon in the new edition by a writer using the signature of the editor; and whom it did not serve the purpose of Ritson to believe was Steevens. From a note in a cancelled leaf of the preface, he supposed his 'anonymous friend,' as he designates him, to be the author of a Familiar Address to the Curious in English Poetry; more particularly to the readers of Shakspeare, by Thirsites Literarius, 1784, 8vo. This tract was written in the first tense, attempting to create a belief of its being the production of Ritson, and gave him great offence. That he had reason to suspect this rather inconsequential production originated with Steevens seems probable, as he remarks 'however little relation it may have to Shakspeare, the author has had interest enough to procure it a place in the list of Detached Pieces of Criticism, &c.' 'But, after printing a violent and abusive note on the author, it was cancelled to

"The Quip Modest, a few words by way of Supplement to his Remarks on the last edition of Shakspeare occasioned by a republication of that edition."

In Easter Term, 1789, Ritson was called to the bar, and agreeably to his usual custom, spent part of his long vacation at Stockton.[1] In that year he printed a "Digest of the Proceedings of the Court Leet of the Manor and Liberty of the Savoy, from 1682." The nervous complaint under which he laboured for many years, to the irritability proceeding from which the tone and temper of his criticisms have been attributed, is first alluded to by him in the summer of 1790. "I am," he says, in a letter to Mr. Harrison, dated on the 22nd June, "become so nervous, as they call it, that I have very seldom either resolution or capacity to write the shortest note on the most trivial occasion. Any thing beyond a mere letter of business is attended with so much trouble and difficulty as to make me eagerly lay hold of any trifling pretext to put it off till the next day."[2]

substitute one declaring 'that the candour, liberality, and politeness, which distinguished Mr. Steevens, utterly exclude him from every imputation.'"

[1] Letters, i. p. 148. [2] Ibid. p. 162, 163.

Ritson stated in that letter his intention of visiting the North, which he fulfilled, but without deriving the advantages he expected; for his letters from Stockton in August in that year speak of his being then seriously ill.[1] His health was, it would seem, permanently affected; and in December following he told Mr. Walker that he imagined his complaint had been stealing on him for some years, and had little hope of its yielding to medicine.[2] His collection of "Ancient Songs"[3] which had been nearly three years in the press,[4] appeared about this time; and as it contains two disrespectful allusions to Warton[5] which a regard for the sanctity of the grave ought perhaps to have withheld, it is important to Ritsons character to notice his allusion to the death of that accomplished writer in his correspondence, because it not only proves that the remark in his work was written before such an event was contemplated, but that he regretted it should occur. To Mr. Walker, in June 1790, he said: "You see "I have lost my old friend, Tom Warton,—Well! 'I war not with the dead,' and shall treat

[1] Letters, vol. i. 172, 174. [2] Letters, vol. i. 176.

[3] A new edition of this interesting work was published in 1829.

[4] Letters, vol. i. 152, 169.

[5] See pages 37, 286, of the original edition.

his ashes with the reverence I ought possibly to have bestowed on his person. Unfortunately, he is introduced, not always in the most serious or respectful manner, in a work which has been long printed, but which, I think, my bookseller does not choose to publish till both the editor and all his friends and enemies are buried in oblivion." [1]

To this valuable collection of Ancient Songs, in which the editors indefatigable care, patience, and fidelity,[2] are eminently displayed, he prefixed Dissertations "on Ancient Minstrels," and "on the Songs, Music, and Instrumental Performance of the Ancient English," treatises which are sufficient to establish Ritsons research and erudition on these subjects, notwithstanding that subsequent inquiries may have shewn that he has occasionally erred as well in his facts as his inferences. In the first of these Dissertations he had occasion to comment upon the Essay on Minstrels in Percys *Reliques*, but it is agreeable

[1] Letters, vol. i. 169.

[2] Whilst Mr. Park and Mr. Haslewood admit Ritsons "faithfulness of transcript" generally, they except the ballad by Earl Rivers. A recent collation has shewn that this qualification of their praise was unnecessary as it is most faithfully printed from the original.

to observe, that he pays just homage to the merits of the prelate, and adverts to him in the language of courtesy. He expresses, it is true, doubts as to the existence of the Bishops celebrated folio manuscript; and it is unfortunate that he was not sufficiently influenced by the statement of Mr. Walker to cancel, or at least to alter, his remarks on the subject. "As a publication of uncommon elegance and poetical merit," he told that gentleman in a letter of the 4th November, 1789, "I have always been, and still am, a warm admirer of Bishop Percys *Reliques*; and though I have been persuaded that he has not on every occasion been so scrupulously attentive to his originals as I think the work required, I shall be very glad to find the idea unfounded, and readily confess that what you have been so obliging as to tell me about the folio Ms. has in a great measure removed my prejudice on that head. The limits of a letter will not permit me to enter fully into the discussion of a question upon which I believe, a good deal may be said."[1]

Ritsons "Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry" were published early in 1791, with unusual typographical elegance, his motive for which is thus described in his preface. "The ori-

[1] Letters, vol. i. 152.

ginals have fallen in his way on various occasions, and the pleasing recollection of that happiest period of which most of them were the familiar acquaintance has induced him to give them to the public with a degree of elegance, fidelity, and correctness, seldom instanced in republications of greater importance." In this year he likewise printed two valuable law tracts, one on the *Office of Constable*, and the other on the *Jurisdiction of the Court Leet* wherein his research and accuracy in illustration of legal antiquities were so satisfactorily evinced, that it is to be regretted he did not devote more of his time to similar subjects. To the law however as a profession he was never attached; and about this time he remarked in one of his letters, "as to the circuit, I sacrifice it without reluctance. I never had reason to expect it would be an object in point of income, and the peculiar habits and modes of existence in which I have thought proper to indulge myself render it much more disagreable than alluring in any other respect. I only wish it was in my power to relinquish the profession altogether with as little ceremony." [1]

When it is remembered that Ritson was once a

[1] To Mr. Harrison, dated, 3rd. August, 1791. Letters, vol. i. 198.

Jacobite, and a strenuous asserter of the divine right of kings, it must appear paradoxical to find that the French Revolution and the doctrine of "liberty and equality," excited his warmest admiration; and the author of the Tables of the English Succession, and of numerous passages decrying the revolution of 1688, as well as all other violent interruptions of the line of succession in our history, not only styled himself, and applied to his intimate friends, the term "Citizen," but asserted that his "sentiments were, and ever had been, so entirely correspondent to the ruling measures in France, that he had only to rejoice at seeing a theory he had so long admired reduced to practice;" and he proceeds to ridicule all aristocratic distinctions.[2] The first indication of this extraordinary change in his sentiments was in June 1791, when he remarked to Mr. Harrison, "My desire to reside for a few weeks at, or near, Paris, has been increasing ever since the revolution, and is in reality very strong, which you will easily conceive when I give it as a decided opinion that no people, ancient or modern, was ever so deserving of admiration."[2]

Ritson accordingly went to Paris in the ensuing August, accompanied by his friend, Shield,

[1] Letters, vol. i. 208. [2] Ibid. 193.

where he remained until October. His visit to the French metropolis increased his veneration for the new order of things; and of the city, its libraries, public monuments, and antiquities, he spoke in strong terms of praise.[1] The letter, containing a description of Paris, is remarkable for exhibiting the earliest specimen[2] of Ritsons peculiar system, if indeed it can be so called, of orthography, but which in any other person might excite the suspicion of having arisen from pedantry and affectation. In this communication he said to his correspondent "You observe, by the way, i am teaching you how to spell;" and added, "if you know any cause or just impediment why words should not be spelled in my way, you are to declare it."[3] He resolved, it appears at this period,[4] owing perhaps in some degree to the conduct of one of his friends at Stockton, to sell his little property there, and to visit the north no more. The cause of the coolness be-

[1] Letters, vol. i. 202.

[2] The only important peculiarities of this nature in his earlier productions, are the substitution of the words "*his*self" for "himself," and "*their*selves" for "themselves."

[3] Letters, vol. i. 203, 205.

[4] Letter to Mr. Wadeson, 15th December. 1791. vol. i. 207.

tween them is humourously described by Ritson in one of his letters;[1] and those better acquainted with mankind than himself will not be surprised that it interrupted a friendship of even twelve years duration. His letters on the subject, however, evince moderation and deep feeling:[2] "My mind and spirits," he says, "have sustained a shock of which it will not be easy for me to get the better. I am arrived at a time of life when the interruption of a much shorter acquaintance than ours is more to be dreaded than any friendship is to be courted; and the confidence that nothing of this kind would ever take place between us has rendered the disappointment inexpressibly severe. What can I say? I shall endeavour to forget every thing that has passed, and to regain the favourable opinion I entertained of your friendship on the 31st of December, 1790."

The general tone of Ritsons letters in the year 1791, indicated a mind ill at ease. Gloom and discontent continually shew themselves; and he himself complained of the fretfulness of his disposition.[3] Those who, from painful experience, know

[1] Letters, vol i. 211.

[2] Ibid. 200, 201. See also the preceding letters to Mr. Rowntree.

[3] Letters, vol. i. 184.

how intimate is the connection between mind and body, and how much the imperfections of the casket tend to injure the precious jewel within, will have no difficulty in ascribing the morbid and querulous feelings of which Ritson was so frequently the victim to corporeal causes. To what extent his peculiar system of diet may have increased or augmented his infirmities, is a question which his present biographer has not the necessary knowledge to discuss.

The edition of Malones Shakspeare induced him to print a tract in this year, intitled "Cursory Criticisms," on that work, which he addressed, in a bitterly acrimonious epistle, to the Monthly and Critical Reviewers, by whom he had been treated with harshness, if not injustice. To this pamphlet Malone replied in a letter to Dr. Farmer, and it must be confessed that if success was on Ritsons side in the controversy, the merit of temper and suavity must be awarded to his adversary. His own opinion on the subject is thus stated to Mr. Harrison: "I send you a pamphlet, in which I flatter myself I have totally demolished the great Mr. Malone. He has attempted to answer it by the most contemptible thing in nature."[1] If, however, he treated Malone on this

[1] Letters, vol. i. 215.

and on some other occasions with rudeness, he was far from insensible of his merit; and it is gratifying to adduce evidence, not merely of his readiness to do that gentleman justice, but even to defend him when unjustly condemned.' In a letter to his nephew, dated 20th April, 1796, he excused himself under the *lex talionis* for the personalities in the "Quip Modest," and observed—"You will do Mr. Malone great injustice if you suppose him to be in all respects what I may have endeavoured to represent him in some. In order that he may recover your more favourable opinion, let me recommend to your perusal, the discussion, in his *prolegomena,* intitled *Shakspeare, Ford, and Jonson,* and his *Dissertation on the three parts of King Henry the Sixth,* (to which I am more indebted for an acquaintance with the manner of our great dramatic poet than to any thing I ever read). His recent inquiry into the Shakspearian forgeries evinces, also, considerable industry and acuteness, and is certainly worth your reading. I do not mean to say that there was any difficulty in the subject; but it certainly derived importance from the ignorant presumption and cullibility of certain literary aristocrats who have considerable influence upon what is called the public. As to the personalities in my *Quip Modest* and *Cursory*

Criticisms, I can only defend them by those of my antagonist. In behalf of the *Remarks* I have nothing to say. Indeed, I should think you much better employed in putting them into the fire, than in a vain attempt to diminish the inaccuracies of such a mass of error both typographical and *authorial.*[1]"

To this may be added, that Ritson eventually withdrew the unsold copies of the *Cursory Criticisms* from his publishers and destroyed them. In 1792 he revised an edition, which it is believed was never published, of the tragedy of "Dido," by his friend and former townsman Joseph Reed, intended to render a selection of that gentlemans printed works more complete. And to this selection is prefixed a short account of the ingenious author.[2]

Early in 1793, Ritson adopted the French Calendar in dating, and the republican style in concluding his letters to his nephew, and to the most intimate of his "citizen" friends.[3] In this year, he published the first volume of *The English Anthology,* an interesting collection of pieces

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 122.

[2] Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes,* vol. ix. 116, and *Biographia Dramatica.* 1812. ii. 162.

[3] Letters, vol. ii. 12.

by the most eminent poets from the reign of Henry the Eighth; and, in 1794, his Collection of "Scotish Songs," on which he had been long engaged, was given to the public. This work was followed, in the ensuing year, by the publication of the "Poems of Laurence Minot," written in 1352, descriptive of many of the principal events in the early part of the reign of Edward the Third, the preface and notes to which are highly creditable to the editors historical acquirements. Soon afterwards appeared his interesting "Collection of all the ancient poems, songs, and ballads now extant relative to Robin Hood, in two volumes."

Ritsons Letters, in 1793, 1794 and 1795, prove him to have been deeply imbued with the Gallican frenzy, a decided democrat, a disciple of Paine, Voltaire, and Rousseau,[1] and the associate, if not the friend, of Godwin, Holcroft, Thelwall, and

[1] To his nephew he says, in January, 1794, "I send you a beautiful edition and copy of Rousseaus *Inégalité des hommes*. The excellent author looks down upon me: on the other side of the fire-place hangs the sarcastic Voltaire; while the enlightened and enlightening Thomas fronts the door: which is probably the reason, by the way, that scarce any body has entered it since he made his appearance."—Letters, vol. ii. 39.

others of the same school. But with them and their selfishness, he soon became disgusted; and his sentiments respecting them are thus described, in speaking of the attempt to obtain a subscription for the defence of "Citizen Yorke" in 1795: "To confess the truth, the more I see of these modern patriots and philosophers, the less I like them. All of them disapproved of Geralds having recourse to the Scotish advocates, though it was but to argue what we call a point of law; and yet, when their own precious existence was supposed to be in danger, they were ready enough to court the means of defence which they had before so uniformly reprobated. Their constant cant is, the force and energy of mind, to which all opposition is to be ineffectual; but none of them, I say, has ever chosen to rely upon that irresistible power in his own case."[1] He expresses an intention to attend the trial of Horne Tooke, on which occasion he, for the first time, purposes to wear his professional costume, in order to obtain a seat in the court; whence it is evident that his practice was confined to his chambers.

It is curious to contrast the difference between Ritsons own conduct and the excellent advice

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 69.

which he gave his nephew, who professed his uncles political opinions: "I would recommend it to you," he says, in a letter of the 30th January, 1794, "as a friend, to lay your politics and philosophy upon the shelf, for a few years at least; their temporary absence will do you no harm, and their perpetual presence can do you no good. Your first and principal (if not sole) object should be, by a sedulous and unremitting attention to business, to do justice to your employers, and acquire the means of an honest independency. Whatever change may take place you must have better pretensions, I presume, to intitle yourself to its advantages than a set of political and religious opinions; unless you think it sufficient to emulate the *bons citoyens* who make it their business, in rags and tatters, to discuss questions in the *Jardin de la Révolution*, for the good of their country."[1]

The singularity of Ritsons sentiments were not, however, confined to religion or politics, and whatever were his opinions they were always expressed with vehement sincerity. When dissuading his nephew from studying for the bar, he indulges in a violent tirade against attornies, though in the same letter he advises him to become

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 40.

one![1] Of Scotchmen he entertained a dislike almost as inveterate as that of Junius, which he availed himself of every opportunity to display; and yet he was deeply attached to the history, poetry, and antiquities of Scotland, and devoted considerable labour and money to their illustration. His hatred of the Whigs, though then a democrat, was bitter and uncompromising, so true is it that as mankind approximate in creeds, whether religious or political, their animosity becomes fiercer and more unrelenting. "Always prefer Tory or Jacobite writers," he told his nephew, in April, 1796: "the Whigs are the greatest liars in the world. You consult history for facts, not principles. The Whigs, I allow, have the advantage in the latter, and this advantage they are constantly labouring to support by a misrepresentation of the former."[2]

The Shakspearian papers, which were said to have been discovered by Ireland, naturally attracted the attention of so enthusiastic an admirer of the poet; but his sagacity at once detected the forgery, and he spoke of the fraud with his accustomed energy.[3]

[1] Letter, 9th August, 1793, vol. ii. 22.
[2] Letters, vol. ii. 121.
[3] Ibid. vol. ii. 75, 92.

During the next six years Ritson did not send any work to the press, and all which is known respecting him occurs in his letters. These present a melancholy picture of his situation; for the greater part contain allusions to his decaying health and depressed spirits. As early as July, 1793, he spoke of himself as approaching fast towards his end;[1] and after that time death appears to have been constantly in his thoughts.[2] In February, 1798, he said he was rapidly declining both in mind and body;[3] and a few months afterwards, he gave his nephew the following lamentable account of his condition. "My complaint," he says, "is neither a fever nor a consumption; but it renders my existence miserable, and I have no hope of getting the better of it. As, at the same, I can eat, and drink, and walk about, it would be difficult to convince *sleekheaded men, and such as sleep o' nights,* that any thing is the matter with me: and, indeed, it is a subject upon which I do not like to explain myself, and wish nobody to inquire after. I am apprehensive of an entire loss of memory; as I am daily forgetting the most common words in the language, and

[1] Ibid. vol. ii. 20. [2] Ibid. vol. ii. 61.
[3] Ibid. vol. ii. 164.

you would be surprised to learn the trouble and vexation which this foolish letter has cost me."[1]

Early in the year 1802, he visited Stockton for the last time: he remained only a fortnight; and soon after his return to Grays Inn, was seized with apoplexy, which nearly proved fatal.[2] Before the 17th of the ensuing April, he experienced another attack,[3] and though his general health was considerably shaken, his ardour for literary pursuits was not abated. In the interval he published an extremely useful volume, in the completion of which he was materially aided by his friends Mr. Park and Mr. Douce, entitled *Bibliographia Poetica*, being a catalogue of English poets of the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries;[4] a Collection (in three volumes) of Ancient English Metrical Romances; and "An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food, as a Moral Duty," which was his last production. About this period he corresponded with Mr. (afterwards Sir Walter) Scott, his letters to whom evince perfect possession of his faculties and unsubdued zeal. It does

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 165. See also p. p. 181, 195, 202.
[2] Ibid. 216. [3] Ibid. 220.
[4] Haslewoods *Life of Ritson*, p. 25-27.

not exactly appear when his acquaintance with that distinguished individual commenced, but that he was honoured with his esteem is certain; and he, more than once, alludes to him in his poems and novels in terms of kindness and respect. On one occasion, he visited Scott at Laswade, when their mutual friend Doctor Leyden was there, which circumstance was among Ritsons latest and most gratifying recollections; and the hope of another visit seems to have been cherished by him to the last.[1] The publication of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* afforded him inexpressible delight, and the letter acknowledging it, dated on the 10th June, 1802, was written under a temporary mental sunshine which that work might have tended to create. Ritson therein speaks of having three objects for his annual autumnal excursion—namely, to go to Paris, Wales, or Durham, and he looked forward to visiting Edinburgh in the following year.[2] But all his plans were destined to be frustrated by an imperious power. Just as he was about to set off for Paris,[3] he was seized with a paralytical affection, which compelled him to try the effect of the Bath waters. From this severe visitation he, however, rallied,

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 229. [2] Ibid. 227.

[3] Ibid. 229. Letter to Sir Walter Scott in February 1803.

though he brought from Bath an incurable disease besides those which obliged him to go there,[1] but his letters to Scott and others, until the middle of August in that year, betray no want of intellectual energy. To sickness were unhappily added pecuniary cares; for having a short time before been induced, notwithstanding his avowed detestation of every species of gambling, to speculate on the Stock Exchange, with all the money he could collect, the unexpected peace produced so sudden an effect on the funds as to cause a loss to him of upwards of a thousand pounds, in consequence of which he was, he said, utterly ruined.[2] He immediately sold a part of his library, and those only who can understand the attachment of a literary man to the books which he has himself collected, which have been his constant companions for years, and which have proved his most faithful friends, can appreciate the pang that it costs to part with them. This heavy sacrifice was not the only one he was compelled to undergo; and the following passage from his letter to his kinswoman, Mrs. Mary Ritson, proves that his regret was unalloyed by selfishness:

"I have been forced to sell my uncles land in Strickland, which I had always intended for my

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 229. [2] Letters, vol. ii. 236.

dear cousins, Jane and Mary, and shall, as long, as I live, lament that I did not make it secure. You see, therefore, I have undergone the fate of old Coles dog, (according to the story), he would take the wall of a waggon, and was crushed to death for his ambition!"[1] His devotion to literature nevertheless, did not forsake him, and neither poverty nor sickness could destroy his enthusiasm, or shake his firmness.

The bigot will indulge in a sneer of hypocritical and contemptuous pity — the humble and pious Christian, confident in the blessings of his own faith and tolerant of the creeds of others, will lament, to find that Ritson had no hope of a life beyond the grave. On the 21st of March, 1801, in a letter addressed to his "worthy, venerable, and very dear friend," Mr. Harrison, congratulating him on living to see the new century, he observed: "You know my sentiments with regard to other worlds, which, I believe, are not likely to change. My health is much impaired, my frame disordered, and my spirits depressed; so that I have no hopes for myself of an eternal existence; and am rather, in fact, disposed to wonder that I have already lived so long, having had the mortification to see many

[1] Letters, vol. ii. 236.

whom I loved and esteemed drop from time to time around me at a much more immature age."[1]

If the inappreciable blessings of Christianity did not lend their solace to Ritsons deathbed, the loss was his own, and the privation calls rather for the commiseration than the censure of the world. The recollection of a well spent life, during which he had sedulously, and with almost ascetic rigour, obeyed the dictates of his conscience, venerated truth with romantic zeal, evinced the most delicate and refined humanity, proved himself a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, as well as a kind parent to an orphan nephew, and uniformly "did to others what he would they should do to him," must however have soothed the pangs of disease, and enabled him to take a parting view of the world without regret or remorse. Belief does not depend upon volition, and Ritson probably remembered, with humility rather than arrogance, the philosophical expression of the poet:

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose *life* is in the right."

The last of his letters which is published, dated on the 16th of August 1803, principally related

[1] Letters, vol. ii. p. 105.

to literary matters, and proves that his ardour had not at all diminished. His life of King Arthur was then finished, and he was, he says, engaged on a life of the Saviour.[1] On the 10th of September, however, he was attacked with paralysis of the brain, and during the paroxysm which ensued, he burned nearly the whole of his valuable catalogue of Romances, and many other manuscripts. By the advice of his physician, Dr. Temple of Bedford-row, and under the affectionate care of his nephew, Mr. Frank, who hastened to him from the north, he was removed from his confined chambers to the airy premises and grounds of the late Sir Jonathan Miles, at Hoxton, where he expired on the 23rd of September, 1803, at four o'clock in the morning, having nearly completed his fifty-first year. Ritson was buried on the 27th of that month in Bunhill Fields, near the grave of his friend Baynes, but no stone marks the place of their remains. His will which, from its being characteristic of him, is here given, was not discovered until after administration was granted to Mr. Frank. With the exception of the quick lime, all the wishes of the deceased respecting his funeral, (which had been repeatedly expressed to his nephew,) were scrupulously

[1] Letters, vol. ii. p. 248.

complied with: the only attendants on the occasion being his friend and townsman, John Wear, Esq. a Bencher of Grays Inn, and Mr. Frank.

"THIS IS MY WILL. The box, containing books and papers relating to the Duchy of Lancaster, is, as conveniently as may be after my decease, to be delivered to the Duchy Office; my account with which, as high-bailiff of the liberty of the Savoy, is to be settled as soon as possible. All my printed and manuscript books and papers to be sold by Leigh, Sotheby and son, booksellers and auctioneers, in York-street, Covent-garden; and the furniture and all personal articles, in my chambers, at the time of my decease, to be sold by Thomas King, of King-street, near Covent-garden, auctioneer. The residue of my personal estate, which shall remain after payment of my funeral expences, the expence of the probate of my will, and debts, I give to my nephew, Joseph Frank, of Stockton, in the county of Durham, gentleman, whom I appoint executor of this my will. With respect to my funeral, (if I happen to die, that is, in the county of Middlesex, or the city of London), my most earnest request to my executor is, that my body

may be interred in the burying-ground of Bunhill fields, with the least possible ceremony, attendance, or expence, without the presence of a clergyman, and my coffin being previously, carefully and effectually filled with quick lime.

J. RITSON.

GRAYS INN, 7th of September, 1803."

Besides the numerous works which Ritson gave to the world, he prepared several others for the press, of equal or greater merit, which have since been edited by Mr. Frank, in a manner worthy of his eminent relative.[1] These volumes, together with numerous manuscripts, form a monument of learning, industry, and zeal, which has seldom been equalled, and must secure veneration for Ritsons name. Upon his acquirements and character, it is not requisite to add much to what has already been said. His eccentricities and errors have been candidly admitted; and on these it would answer no good purpose to dwell. But gratitude for his labours, and a love of justice, demanded that evidence of his virtues should be produced, since too

[1] Viz. I. The Office of Bailiff of a Liberty. 8vo. 1811. II. The Life of King Arthur. 8vo. 1825. III. Memoirs of the Celts or Gauls. 8vo. 1827. IV. Annals of the Caledonians &c. 2 vols. 8vo. 1828. and V. Fairy Tales. 8vo. 1831.

much trouble has been taken to stigmatize him as a gloomy misanthrope to whom the charities of our nature were absolute strangers. Mr. Surtees in an elegant memoir of Ritson,[1] speaks of him from personal knowledge; and after attributing his morbid irritability of temper, and secluded habits to an early disappointment of the affections, he observes:

"In whatever singular habits or speculative opinions he might indulge, his deep and serious feelings were neither morose nor unsocial; his attachments were steady and disinterested; the associates of his youth were the friends of his age, and he lost the regard of no honest man whose good opinion he had once acquired. He neglected no natural tie of blood or connexion, and to an only nephew his attention was parental. In society with those in whose characters he had confidence, Ritson was a lively, cheerful companion, frank and unreserved; and if tenacious of his own peculiar opinions, he was at least most tolerant of those of others, and would permit every one to dust it away, and jingle his bells to his own tune."

Ritson carried his singularities into his profes-

[1] History of Durham. vol. iii. p. 193.

sional conduct, and the following anecdotes are related of him by the writer just quoted. "He chose to exercise his judgment and his sturdy morality on questions which a less scrupulous lawyer would have left to his client to settle with his own conscience. For instance, having made up his mind that the Duke of Athol had already been sufficiently remunerated for ceding his rights in the Isle of Man, he refused all the solicitations of his friend, Francis Russell, Esq., Solicitor to the Board of Controul, to induce him to draw the draft of a petition to Parliament, for that further recompense which the Duke afterwards received. The argument, if you do not, another will, had no effect on Ritson, nor would he ever set cheerily to work, without being perfectly satisfied of the strict propriety of the business in which he was engaged. As a somewhat ludicrous instance, he steadily refused to draw the draft of Jonas Hanways Bill for the Incorporation of the Chimney-sweepers."

In after years he was, however, fully sensible of his error. "Avoid," he advises his nephew, in April 1798, "as much as possible, all appearance of singularity or affectation, and while you are a man of business, endeavour to be nothing else: I have learned the value of this piece of

advice by dear-bought experience; and experience, generally, both costs too much, and comes too late, to be of service to the purchaser."[1]

"He abstained," adds Mr. Surtees, "on a principle of humanity, from the use of animal food, and was bold [enough] to publish a book in defence of his opinion. I could mention a hundred instances of Ritsons unaffected feeling for the sufferings of the brute creation — their groans entered his soul.—It is easy to ridicule such feelings, but I own I had rather possess them than laugh at them: and I believe, that more folks than choose to confess it, have a spice of Ritsons condition. To follow his plan of abstinence were absurd, and nearly impossible; yet it is surely a disagreeable necessity which drives us to form part of a system where, of dire necessity, the powerful exist by preying on the weak. Perhaps no sterner character is impressed on a fallen world."

No slight praise is contained in the following statement in the same memoir:—"On one subject, the most serious of all, on which we differed *toto cœlo*, I can safely assert, that on me, then a very young man, Ritson never intruded a single observation that would be deemed either reflecting

[1] Letters, vol. ii. p. 167.

or insidious; indeed, I believe, he would have thought it a breach of moral rectitude to have endeavoured to unsettle my opinions. There was much of neutral ground on which we could safely meet."

"A friendly correspondence," (continues Mr. Surtees) was maintained betwixt Sir Walter Scott and Ritson, till the death of the latter. I recollect that Scott translated for him *Les Souvenirs de Molinet.* I take the liberty to quote [from Sir Walters letters] the following honorable testimony to Ritsons character, because it describes most admirably that excessive aspiration after absolute and exact verity, which Ritson carried with him into every transaction of common life; and which, I verily believe, was one cause of that unfortunate asperity with which he treated some most respectable contemporaries.—"I loved poor Ritson, with all his singularities; he was always kind and indulgent to me. He had an honesty of principle about him, which if it went to ridiculous extremities, was still respectable, from the soundness of the foundation. I don't believe the world could have made Ritson say the thing he did not think. I wish we had his like at present."—and again "I had a great kindness for Ritson, and always received from him the readiest, kindest,

and most liberal assistance in the objects of our joint pursuits. One thing I observed in his temper an attention to which rendered communication with him much more easy than if it was neglected. Mr. Ritson was very literal, and precise in his own statements, and expecting others to be the same, was much disgusted with any loose or inaccurate averment. I remember rather a ludicrous instance. He made me a visit of two days, at my cottage, near Laswade; in the course of conversation we talked of the Roman wall, and I was surprised to find that he had adopted, on the authority of some person at Hexham, a strong persuasion that its remains were no where visible, or at least not above a foot or two in height. I hastily assured him, that this was so far from being true, that I had myself seen a portion of it standing high enough for the fall to break a man's neck. Of this he took a formal memorandum, and having visited the place (Glenwhelt, near Gilsland) he wrote to me, or, I think, rather to John Leyden, to say, that he really thought that a fall from it would break a mans neck, at least, it was so high as to render the experiment dangerous. I immediately saw what a risk I had been in, for you may believe, I had no idea of being taken quite so literally."

The remark, that Ritson preserved the attachment of his friends, is corroborated by a striking passage in a letter from Lieutenant Hoar, in India, in April, 1785: "I am much pleased with the attachment of a little Acheen dog, that I call *Ritson*. It recalls to mind the long and sincere friendship of his namesake: and who knows but the poor fellow may live to lick your hand. When I die, Ritson, I'll send him home to you, and now and then give him a meal, for the sake of his old master!" Of the Memoirs of Ritson, which appeared in the periodical journals soon after his decease, the most able has been attributed to the pen of Mr. Godwin.[1] But nothing could be more mistaken than to describe Ritsons style as "harsh, rugged and barren," or than to say of his controversial writings, that they are more remarkable for "rudeness, bitterness, and insult, than is, perhaps, to be found in any other controversialist." Of the more favourable parts of Ritsons character, Mr. Godwin thus speaks: "He was greatly distinguished for the acuteness of his judgment, and the profoundness of his researches, in the characters of a consulting barrister, and a conveyancer. But his literary enquiries were by no means confined within the

[1] Monthly Magazine, for November, 1803.

limits of his profession, and he was, perhaps, the most successful of those persons by whom the investigation of old English literature and antiquities was cultivated, in the latter part of the eighteenth century. His memory was so tenacious, that nothing stored there was obliterated: the most astonishing labours and indefatigable enquiries were to him an amusement; and his penetration and judgment were so exact, that it is difficult, in his voluminous publications, to detect a single error of fact, or of inference. He was liberal in the disposition of his income, and ever ready to relieve merit in distress. He had great ingenuousness and integrity of disposition, never indulging himself in any sort of pretence and imposition, practising rigidly, in his conduct, the moral judgments of his understanding, and constantly abstaining from the commission of every thing he felt to be wrong."

The following anecdotes are related in Mr. Godwins Memoir. "As [High] Bailiff of the Savoy, it was Ritsons singular fortune to be connected with Mr. Reeves, the notorious leader of the association for encouraging spies and informers, and for suppressing the freedom of writing and speaking upon political topics. — Mr. Reeves

was High Steward of the Savoy; and for his political conduct was regarded with no less antipathy by Mr. Ritson than Malone and Warton for their literary misdemeanours. Mr. Reeves, a few years ago resigned his office of High Steward; and it was a favourite opinion of Mr. Ritson, that he, by his hostilities, had driven this redoubted champion from his station. One further singularity of this extraordinary man is, that, after having laboured so incessantly for the information of the world, he expressed a desire that he might be forgotten.—He made it his particular request that no stone might be placed over his grave, and added a hope that nothing, good or ill, might be said of his memory."

The authority, upon which the opinion rests that Ritson was desirous of being forgotten by the world, seems very doubtful; for, instead of having expressed the wish here ascribed to him, no other evidence of his sentiments on the subject exists than that the following extract from Pope happened to be discovered among his papers:

> "Here let me live unseen, unknown,
> Here unlamented let me die,
> Steal from the world, and not a stone
> Tell where I lie."

Among his friends, Mr. Walker,[1] from his literary attainments, and the high respect which Ritson entertained for his talents and character merits a particular notice. As soon as the Memoir which has been attributed to Godwin appeared, Walker added his tribute of respect to Ritsons memory.[2] It had been said that Ritson confessed his ignorance of the learned languages, upon which Walker very justly observed: "Of the Greek language he was probably ignorant; but he certainly evinces a familiar acquaintance with the Latin language, though it is possible he might not have been critically skilled in it. Many of his authorities exist only in that language; and his quotations from the Roman poets are apt and frequent. With French, Spanish, and Italian, he was, I believe, intimate. A man acquainted with one dead language, and three living tongues besides

[1] Joseph Cooper Walker, Esq. was the author of "*An essay on the revival of the drama in Italy*," a "*Life of Tassoni*," and of "*Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*," which work produced his acquaintance with Ritson. This accomplished person, of whom a memoir is given in the "*Gentlemans Magazine*," for May, 1810, died at St. Valeri, near Bray, in Ireland, on the 12th of April in that year, aged forty-nine.

[2] Monthly Magazine, November, 1803.

his own, may be safely deemed learned, and is undoubtedly fully qualified to set up as an author, a critic, and an antiquary. Greek is by no means an indispensable requisite."

Though Mr. Walker too readily conceded the propriety of what had been advanced of Ritsons controversial writings, he bore testimony to the urbanity of his manners. "The death of such a man is a national loss; and to his friends a matter of deep regret. As a friend and correspondent, I lament him sincerely. My personal acquaintance with him was slight; it was confined to three interviews, in the year 1792. The moroseness which distinguishes his writings, did not appear in his manner; it was civil and unassuming. It was when he took up his pen that his bile rose."

The justice of the following observation of Mr. Walker, is indisputable: "An enthusiastic lover of historic truth, he sought it with an ardour which often rendered him intemperate. Though the subjects of which he treats generally led him into the bewildering gloom of the gothic ages, he seldom indulged in conjecture; indeed, such was the native integrity of his mind, that he seemed afraid to form an hypothesis, lest he should be seduced into the perversion of truth for its sup-

port. As an historian, he was rigidly accurate—as a critic, he was uncharitably severe."

These allusions to his severity as a writer will be appropriately concluded with a copy of some witty lines, which appeared in the St. James's Chronicle, of the 3rd of June, 1783, and have been assigned to the pen of Mr. James Dodsley, the bookseller; but were more probably the production of Mr. Steevens.

"THE PYTHAGOREAN CRITIC."

"By wise Pythagoras taught, young Ritson's meals
With bloody viands never are defil'd;
For quadruped, for bird, for fish he feels,
His board ne'er smoaks with roast meat, or with boil'd.
In this one instance pious, mild, and tame,
He's surely in another a great sinner,
For man, cries Ritson, man's alone my game!
On him I make a most delicious dinner!
To venison and to partridge I've no *gout;*
For Warton Tom such dainties I resign:
Give me plump Steevens, and large Johnson too,
And take your turkey and your savoury chine."

Ritsons person was small and thin, with a fair, and fresh coloured, complexion, and his appearance was remarkably neat and gentlemanlike.[1] His

[1] An etching of a portrait, or rather caricature, of Ritson, is given in Nichols's *Illustrations of Literary History*, vol. iii. p. 775, and a *silouette* is affixed to Haslewoods *Life;* but neither is correct or satisfactory.

disposition was kind, cheerful, and amiable, and notwithstanding the supposed irritability of his temper,[1] his manners in society were mild and conciliatory. Even a writer, who speaks of him with peculiar harshness, admits that he could be a "good companion."[2]

Thirty years have now nearly elapsed since the grave closed over Joseph Ritson; and it is certainly time that justice should be rendered to his character. The animosities which his criticisms naturally excited must surely have subsided in the breasts of the few of his survivors whom he aggrieved; and it may be expected that even the most rancorous among them will allow his eminent literary services, his unsullied integrity, and his numerous other virtues, to atone for mere defects of temper and constitutional irritability. That his heart was no party to his faults, and that the acerbity of feeling, which he occa-

[1] Ritsons irritability seems however to have been much exaggerated; for, Mr. Godwin, in a letter to him, dated in March 1801, says, "I have often heard you accused as an irritable man, but never having had the smallest ground to reproach you in that respect in an intercourse of considerable length, I have always defended you from the accusation with earnestness and zeal."

[2] "Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*," vol. viii. p. 350.

sionally manifested, did not spring from native malignity of disposition it would be absurd to deny; and his present biographer gladly refers to the many proofs of his readiness to admit the merits of, and even to defend, nearly every one of those persons on whose works he commented with the bitterest severity—Malone, Warton, and Percy. Again it must be urged, that he had no personal animosity to gratify in pointing out the mistakes of those writers, and that the tone of his comments arose from an exaggerated estimate of the subject, and a morbid though unaffected and deep-rooted regard for veracity. As a laborious husbandman in the fields of antiquity, and a most successful gleaner of the neglected beauties of early poetry; as the founder of a school of editorial accuracy; as the boldest exposer of the mischiefs arising from literary forgeries and interpolations; as a stern and uncompromising advocate of humanity, truth, and integrity, Ritsons memory is entitled to the highest veneration and respect. A lover of literature, for its own sake, he never produced a line from sordid feelings; and it is painful to record that, instead of deriving any pecuniary advantage from his labours, he sacrificed out of his humble means no less than five hundred pounds upon his works. Nor did Ritson

derive any consolation for the sacrifices which he made in promoting antiquarian knowledge from the conduct of his fellow labourers towards him; and the only, though most gratifying and appropriate compliment which was ever paid by any LEARNED association to his superior talents and critical sagacity, consisted in his being *rejected* when proposed for admission into the Society of Antiquaries of London!

To pursue the memory of such a man as Ritson with the epithets of "misanthrope," "atheist," "jacobite," "ascetic cynic," and "snarling critic;" to forget his literary merits, and that, after so many years of unceasing toil, he was compelled to sell a part of his library for his support, and this, too, in the very last year of his existence; to perceive that even one of his own books cannot be re-printed without a repetition of calumnies, and rooting up, from his very tomb, the remembrance of all his errors, are new examples of the injustice and inhumanity of the world, and of the effect of a man daring to think for himself, to declare his opinions, and to speak THE TRUTH, in the simple and unsophisticated language in which TRUTH ought to be spoken. Upon Ritsons tomb should one ever be placed over his remains, besides his name, date of birth, and

decease, the lines of Boileau, which he quoted in his earliest publication, ought to be engraved, because they express the principle by which his conduct through life was steadily governed; and in saying this, the highest eulogy is pronounced which a human being is capable of receiving:—

Rien n'est beau que LE VRAI; le vrai seul est aimable.

This memoir cannot, in common justice, be concluded without an expression of esteem and respect for Mr. Frank, Ritsons nephew, protegé, and executor, for the pious zeal with which he has devoted himself to the conservation and extension of his uncles literary fame. Under his superintendence, many of Ritsons works have been published, and others are in preparation, whilst he has spared no pains or expense in collecting letters and other materials illustrative of his life: and to Mr. Frank the writer of this memoir is exclusively indebted for the facts and extracts which it contains.

Letters.

I.

To George Allan, Esquire.

Sir, Grays Inn, 26th August, 1776.

Inclosed I send you a few other papers relating to Durham; I could have wished they had been of a more interesting nature, but I am afraid there are not many articles of consequence to be met with in the collections here. The Harleian Library is remarkably thin, with respect to any thing material, in comparison with most other counties. The Kings Mss. afford nothing, and although the Cotton collection (a mine of ancient literature) has, as Mr. Gough remarks, as many articles concerning the History of Durham as that of any other county, yet these, however valuable in themselves, form a very imperfect set of materials for the general historian, being *wholly* confined to the *ancient*, and *chiefly* the *ecclesiastical*

state of the Palatinate; consisting of the Legends of St. Cuthbert, the Lives of the Bishops and Priors, and such like. Two or three Mss. (by Thos. and Chr. Watson of Dm. tpe Eliz. R.) have the title of complete histories, but upon inspection they appear to be very hasty, injudicious and inaccurate compilations of little or no authority. None of them I think come down later than Hen. 7. The best of the ancient Church Histories of Durham are preserved in Whartons Anglia Sacra, from which and from Simeon (and Turgotus?) one may pick up matter satisfactory enough, both of the ecclesiastical and civil state of the county, for those dark æras. Indeed I am convinced that the Libraries and Public Offices at Durham are the only historical repositories to be consulted without a fear of disappointment.... Dr. Hunters valuable and voluminous collection in the Dean and Chapters Library one should think would almost preclude the necessity or desire of having recourse to other archives. The Bodleian Library at Oxford has an ancient exemplar of "the Boldon Buke," and may contain perhaps many other articles equally valuable, but as I have not yet had an opportunity of consulting the catalogue I cannot satisfy myself in this particular. Bishop Gibsons additions to Camdens description of the county in

the improved edition (1772) are pretty full, being taken from the papers of Mr. Mickleton, Dr. Smith, and others. There are some charters and accounts of Sherburn and other Hospitals in Lelands *Collectanea*, and in the *Itinerary* several parts of the county are described in an accurate and curious manner.

I have copied some papers relative to the rising in the north under the two Earls (i. e.) proclamations, summonses, letters from the Lord President, &c. but I don't know whether you would think them either valuable or curious. If you should I will send them. I am, sir,

Your obliged and obedient humble servant
J. RITSON.

II.

To MR. JOSEPH RITSON, SEN.

DEAR FATHER, Grays Inn, 3d March, 1777.

I really waited (as Nanny tells me you thought I did) to hear how you were before I wrote. I every day hoped to have better news and am very

unhappy in being so much disappointed. Heaven knows how much I have all along pleased myself with thinking I should be able in a few years to render you some assistance towards making you easy and happy in your old age in return for the education and indulgence you bestowed on me in my youth. If you were spared to see me fixed and settled it would be the greatest satisfaction to me, and would I dare say afford a good deal of it to yourself. If we should be deprived of you now (the very thought of which distresses me beyond description) my sorrow will be sincere and such as my duty to so good a parent, whose loss I shall long mourn, ought to prescribe. But however small the room may be for hopes of your recovery I cannot help cherishing them, and ardently wish that the next letter I receive may bring the welcome information of your having got the better of your illness. If praying for your health would be of service to it, my prayers should not be wanting. I cannot—must not—think that this will be the last letter you will receive from me, by many. If it should—but I am not able to support the thought of it.

I am sorry to hear Mr. Robinson should refuse you the small comfort of having your affairs in some degree settled: on such an occasion as

this his behaviour is unfeeling and inhuman to the highest degree.*

I much desire to hear from Nanny as often as she has time to write.

My heart bleeds to think of the distressed situation the whole family is in. I would to god I could be with you for a day—but alas! I should only add to your confusion. May heaven assist you with patience and resignation in your afflictions... I crave your blessing and earnestly commend myself to your remembrance, hoping withal many a year after this to put you in mind of,

dear father,

Your very affectionate son,

J. RITSON.

III.

To Mr. Allan.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 13th February, 1780.

I sat down with an intention of apologising for my long silence, but the least reflection convinced me that I ought rather to ask your pardon for taking the liberty of writing at all.

* Mr. Robinson was a *corn-dealer* and Mr. Ritsons father a *corn-grower*, between whom a connexion in business had existed for several years.

My attendance at the Museum has been so interrupted and imperfect, that I have not had the good fortune to discover any thing relating to the county of Durham curious enough to communicate to you. If you will please to point out any thing there which may be of use to you, I shall be happy to render you every little service in my power.

I observe an excellent pedigree of the Conyerses of Sockburne in one of the Harleian MSS. (No. 6070) if you be not already provided with it. I had copied the inclosed charter from the same article, but it seems scarcely worth the sending.

In the latter end of last vacation my curiosity induced me to visit the Bodleian, and other libraries at Oxford. My success, though not altogether equal to my expectations, was however pretty reasonable. The inclosed notes were taken down with a view to be transmitted to you, whatever use has been made of them since. These notes contain an account of the Bodleian transcript of the Boldon Book. But the greatest, as I think, and most valuable curiosity, is the original register of Richard de Kelawe, which is here preserved among the MSS. bequeathed to the library by the late Dr. Rawlinson. It is an immense parchment folio, and contains all the bishops grants, charters, surveys, commissions, writs, &c. with a variety of

letters, grants, writs, and commissions sent into, or relating to the bishopric, by king Edward I. not only in the bishops time, but while it was in the hands of the crown. In particular, I took notice of two original indentures in French, dated at Stoketon, 7 Oct. in the 12d year of the bishop, [l'an du sacre l'evesque] between his lordship on the one part, and Monsieur Robert Nevyle, and Monsieur Marmaduk of the other, constituting them his governours within the bishopric. There are likewise some very interesting records relating to Barnardcastle and Hartlepool; and a mighty curious, and particular inventory and valuation of the stock, chattels, and effects of Sir John Marmaduke deceased. The charters would be of great service to you, not only in stating the history of property, but in forming and correcting the descents of ancient families.

I took the liberty of communicating some account of these two articles to Mr. Gough, who has done me the honour of inserting it in the new edition of his British Topography.

Out of the above register I have collected a good many names of our palatinate gentry, which I may sometime or other have the pleasure of showing you. I remember when I had last the happiness to be at Darlington, you let me see a list of knights belonging to the county, in Henry

the 3ds time, which you had found among the papers of Mr. Randle. I should be much obliged to you if you could favour me with a copy of it. Also, if you can inform me whether the poll for the county members were ever printed.

In turning over Bradys *Treatise on Boroughs*, I find a copy of King Johns charter to Hartlepool. It was confirmed by queen Elizabeth, an English translation of whose grant is in Stockton town chest. If you have a copy of the charter granted by king John to the burgesses of Newcastle, I should be glad to learn the date, place where attested, and witnesses names.

In Hickeses *Thesaurus* is a very ancient Saxon charter of land in the bishopric; the place is called Haliware stelle. But you may not perhaps know that there is another in the Cotton library (Aug. A. II.) from bishop Earaulf, of lands at Hamme, A. D. 876. This is a very great curiosity; for, excepting these two instruments, I never met with any thing of the kind in the Saxon times.

Walker (*Sufferings of the Clergy*, Lond. 1714, fol.) has preserved the names of several ministers who were ejected from their livings in the bishopric under the rebel usurpation.

That remarkable story of the Chester ghost, the best authenticated relation that ever was, is told by Dr. More, in the last edition of Glanvills

Saducismus Triumphatus. There is also some account of it in Websters *Display of Witchcraft.* But what I reckon the most curious, and worthy of credit, is the original deposition of Graham the Fuller (to whom the apparition applied) which I copied from a MS. of bishop Tanner. There is a less remarkable story in Webster, (p. 305) of the discovery of the murder of one Ralph Gawkley, of Bishop Auckland.

When I have next the pleasure of seeing you, I shall be glad to be made acquainted with the particulars of Andrew Millses story, which I have often heard strange accounts of, and you mentioned to me when I was last at Darlington. I shall, at the same time, be glad to acquaint you with my design of printing a *Villare* of the county, with useful appendixes, which I have made some progress in, and shall be happy, if it obtain your approbation and assistance.

In the mean while I shall be very proud of your commands as to any thing I can be of the least service to you in,

And am, dear sir,

Your much obliged and

very respectful humble servant,

J. Ritson.

In Anthony à Woods library, in the Ashmoleian

Museum, is a MS. life of dean Whittyngham, which seemed very well worth the perusal, though my short stay would not allow me time to transcribe it; and, in Hyper. Bodl. A. 55, are two letters of James Pilkington, bishop of Durham. Also, in Laud H. 76, is an old MS. chronicle of the church, which, from the rudeness of the writing, and the numerous corrections, may have once belonged thereto.

IV.

To the Editor.

Young Man, London, 15th March, 1780.

I received the letter you wrote to me sometime ago; and though I found you had not made it out of your own head, (which I should have liked much better) yet, as a specimen of your abilities in the art of penmanship, I was very well pleased with it, and take this opportunity and method of showing you some mark of my satisfaction.

If you take the pains you ought to do, and

must do, I doubt not but you will shortly be able both to write and read tolerably well. If you neglect your book, and pay no attention to any thing but play, you will never be able to do either. As a proper application to your book, and a knowledge how to behave yourself, will be a sure mean of continuing, and increasing my esteem and assistance, so ignorance and rudeness will make you certainly neglected or despised, both by me and every body else.

I have sent you a few books, &c. such as I was most entertained with, and instructed by, when I was at your own age; and I hope they will answer as good a purpose, if not a better to yourself. Let me tell you, that the oftener you read them, the better you will understand them: and the more care you take of them, the better I shall like you hereafter. It will be the only method to procure others when you are tired with these.

You will find some few plays, and other things, which you may like better, perhaps, and know more of as you grow bigger. They were not bought on purpose for you, but as I had them, I thought I might as well put them into the box.

As you are now capable of writing to me, if there be any thing which I can send you from this place, you have only to desire me to do so, by a

letter written as well with your own hand, as out of your own head.

Give my duty to your grandmother and my love to your mother, and believe me to be

Your very affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

V.

TO MRS. JANE RITSON.

DEAR MOTHER, Grays Inn, 5th May, 1780.

If I could have thought that you were either so ill, or so anxious to hear from me as Nanny represents, I hope you will believe that I should not have neglected writing so long. I am extremely sorry to hear of your dangerous state of health, but still hope it is not so desperate as you seem to think. I have so few, and those such slender connections with mankind, that if we lose you I shall not be very uneasy at any thing that may happen to me. Mr. Ralph Hoar acquainted me with your request and I had given him my sentiments to communicate to you on his return, and imagined you did not expect or desire my answer sooner. It is very much my wish that you

should dispose of every thing you have to leave in favour of Nanny and her child, but I think it ought to be secured more particularly than in a common bequest to them. This I doubt not but Mr. Hoar would take the trouble of doing, in case you do not think it prudent to wait 'till his brothers return. There may be an article or two of the furniture which I would like to have, especially the desk which I used to call mine and another thing or so of little value. If I should have an inclination for any thing else, I shall be very ready to make Nanny an ample satisfaction for it.

Trusting that this will find you much better, and with my earnest and hearty prayers and wishes for the perfect recovery of your health,

I remain, dear mother,
Your very affectionate son,
J. Ritson.

VI.

To the Same.

Dear Mother, Grays Inn, 7th June, 1780.

I am very well and am much grieved to find that you should continue otherwise, but hope to

god you will soon get the better of your complaint. As Ralph Hoar would be with you so soon I thought it as well to trouble him with a letter to you, and indeed, business and the confusion which reigns here would have prevented me from writing sooner. A general spirit of discontent has been long increasing among the people: it has at last broken out among the lower class in London. The alarm has been caught from some indulgences lately granted to the Roman Catholics, and nothing is to be heard but "Down with the papists," and "No popery." Several members of parliament, both lords and commons, were on friday last and yesterday, very freely treated by the Protestant Associators, as they call themselves, (above one hundred thousand of them having formed a kind of committee, at the head of which is Lord George Gordon, a young Scotch nobleman, brother to the Duke of Gordon) and one bishop (the Chancellors brother) narrowly escaped with his life. They have plundered the chapels of several foreign ministers and burnt the ornaments, pictures, and plate. Many private mass-houses, popish schools, and houses of papists have likewise suffered. Some of those who turned informers against the rioters have had their shops and houses ransacked and every thing within them burnt before their doors.

One of them was a justice of peace whom they will hang whenever they catch him. Five of the mob having been committed to Newgate and the keeper refusing to set them free, their comrades, yesternight, burnt it to the ground, and set not only their own people, but all the debtors and felons at liberty, three or four of whom were to have been executed within these few days. The building was a late erection of great strength and elegance. Sir John Fieldings house was also plundered of every thing, and the furniture, &c. burnt in the street. This place was "the Public Office," where the acting magistrates sat, and where the books of their proceedings were kept. Lord Mansfields house, in Bloomsbury Square, was burnt this morning, the fire not being yet extinguished. Plate, pictures, and other furniture of a very great value, were either burnt in the street or perished in the house. The soldiery, who have favoured the rioters greatly and even huzzaed and assisted them upon most occasions when they were present, were here ordered to fire, and six men and one woman were killed on the spot: but such a check as this so far from extinguishing the peoples spirit will only make them more desperate. Lord Mansfields country seat about four miles from town is said to be now in flames. Another strong

party has gone twenty miles off to demolish the house of lord Petre, a Roman Catholic peer. Numerous bodies of men are daily expected from the country: and where the ferment will end, no person can possibly tell. Destruction has been vowed both against the houses and persons of several noblemen, bishops, and gentry. Sir George Savile (a most worthy character, and, in other respects, a great favourite with the people, who first introduced the Popish bill into parliament) had his house served like Sir John Fielding's. It is not at all unlikely that, unless the act complained of be repealed, the two houses of parliament, the courts of law, and even the kings palace will in a few days be burnt to the ground. In short, confusion, horror, bloodshed and devastation seem just upon the start for a universal reign. In the mean time no person any way innocent either has, or (except by consequence) will suffer, and most of those whom they single out as examples of their vengeance, have been long and deservedly objects of public detestation. Such as lord Mansfield, lord North, lord Sandwich, lord George Germaine, and others of the present scoundrel ministry.

I thought the foregoing account might afford some amusement, as an uncommon business, but

I am afraid its tediousness will rather be disagreeable to you....

I heartily wish for your recovery, and shall expect to hear of it soon.

With my best prayers for your good health and long life, I remain,

Your affectionate son,

J. RITSON.

VII.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR MOTHER, Grays Inn, 14th June, 1780.

I have received your letter and beg you will not be under the least concern on my account. I fancy I shall take as good care of myself as any body, nor indeed had we the most distant reason to be afraid of personal hurt, as there was not a life lost in the tumult till the military were called out, who have quelled the disturbance with the loss of between one and two hundred people killed, many of them innocent spectators, or such as were passing the streets about their lawful business. There are between fifteen and twenty thousand soldiers in and about the town at present, and since the people have had nothing to dread

from the mob, they are all in arms, and watch every night as if a hundred thousand French were expected every minute. But the military are returning the citizens a very proper compliment for having called them out, by disarming all the private associations, and sending their weapons to the Tower. The same evening on which I wrote to you, but after I had finished and sealed my letter, the mob burnt the Fleet and Kings Bench prisons and set all the debtors at liberty; and likewise the toll gates on Black-friars Bridge, and the greatest part of Holborn was in flames, from their setting fire to two houses and warehouses belonging to Mr. Langdale a papist and distiller, whose [loss] is computed at a hundred thousand pounds. About twelve or fifteen of the mob were burnt in one of the houses not having time to get out. Things are pretty quiet at present and it is imagined will continue so. Whatever happens, you need not be under any apprehensions on my account, as I will take sufficient care of myself.

Lord George Gordon is a close prisoner in the Tower, and a great number are confined on account of the late disturbances. What will, or can be done with them god knows. But the whole is a very strange affair; we have a strange government, and matters are very strangely conducted.

I have only to repeat my wishes for your speedy recovery and lasting good health,

Remaining

Your ever affectionate son,

J. RITSON.

VIII.

To MRS. ANN FRANK.

DEAR SISTER, Grays Inn, 25th Nov^r. 1780.

I sincerely condole with you for the death of our good mother. Had she lived in health and comfort, it would have been my greatest blessing and happiness. But it could be only unthinking cruelty to have wished her continuance in misery and disease. I do not doubt of your having the funeral conducted with such decency and ceremonious attention as befit your situation in life. I have nothing further to desire of you than that you would continue to live, in the house, with prudence and economy. Attend to your little boys schooling and behaviour, and believe me to be,

Your affectionate brother,

J. RITSON.

P. S. Write to me often.

IX.

To the Editor.

Young Man, Grays Inn, 31st. Janry. 1781.

I received your letter, and would have you write to me oftener. I have inclosed you a history of England, and a little book of childish songs, more adapted to your capacity, perhaps, than you will be willing to suppose. But I shall expect that you take particular care of these, as well as of every other thing of the kind I send you. I would advise you, likewise, not to paint and disfigure the cuts in your books, they are either too good to be spoiled, or too bad to be improved. If you will ask me for any book, or other thing you wish for, I will endeavour to send it you. You are much to be commended for getting by heart so excellent a poem as *Chevy chace*. Tell your friend Matthew Wadeson (whom I am sorry we are no longer to expect in London) I desire he would infuse some of his musical crotchets into your pate and make a fidler of you. If you will learn three tunes upon any musical instrument, and play them well, I will give you half a crown

apiece, by way of encouragement to your future endeavours. As you appear so well qualified for getting things by rote, suppose you attack the *Babes in the Wood*, or *Batemans Ghost*. If I am rich enough to come down to Stockton, I will not be inattentive to your accomplishments. In the mean while let me counsel you as a friend, to behave with duty and respect to your mother; to be obedient and submissive to your master; and civil, good-natured, and obliging to your companions and school-fellows; to labour at perfecting yourself in reading and writing; to have no bad connections, nor be guilty of any wicked, base, or dirty actions or expressions. Especially lying, swearing, abusive, or nasty language, which many boys will practise, and most of them come afterwards to the gallows for. Cruelty and barbarity, or wantonness to brute animals, birds, insects, or any other living thing which you might have power over. Not forgetting the inhuman custom of taking birds nests, eggs, &c. which is abominable. All these you ought to detest and abhor; and, by following the contrary and opposite paths of Reason and Virtue, you will obtain, or, what is the same thing, deserve the love and esteem of every one who knows you; and if they do not make you a great man, they will at least make

you a good one, which is a much superior, and more excellent character.... Let me hear from you when you have nothing better to do, and tell me what kind of paints and pictures you want.

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

You should always write your name *Joseph Frank.**

X.

To Mr. Matthew Wadeson.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 28th Febry. 1781.

I was much too hasty in my supposition of your having neglected the commission I troubled you with. You are excellently wise and prudent, and I shall be very slow in questioning your judgement for the future, being fully convinced that your coolness and caution (independent of the sententious shrewdness you appear to have gleaned from Poor Robins Almanacs) a system of morals for which I have the profoundest respect) enable

* That is *at length*. It is somewhat singular that Mr. Ritson has not at any time practised in this respect the advice he gives.

you in all dealings with mankind to act with a degree of justness and policy of which such hot-headed fools as myself have a very inadequate idea, however we many suffer from our ignorance or precipitancy. But neither the longest head, nor the best legs, are alone sufficient to form judgement of thought and propriety of conduct. Long habits, and close observation, seem much more necessary for the purpose. Consider what Poor Robin has delivered on the subject, and you will find I have told you the truth. The consequence is, that you disposed of my commission with the utmost sagacity and good sense.

. . . . .

I take your attention to my sister, and the young pig her son, very kind and friendly of you. I have recommended the *Children in the wood* to him, and would put myself to a trifling expence if you thought he could be taught to play upon some musical instrument, if it were but a bird-call or a *guse-thropple* . . . .

I understand that your brother is married, greatly to his satisfaction. I hope in a few days to hear of a similar proceeding of your own.

I am, dear Mat,
Your sincere friend,
and humble servant,
J. RITSON.

XI.

To the Same.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 1st April, 1781.

By this time I hope you will have received the promised letter you were in expectation of. I am much obliged by your attention to my nephew, but I know not whence you collect any intention in me of making him a papist, unless you suppose that popery and fiddling necessarily go together. I shall rely on your care in preventing his mothers making a methodist of him: but must insist that you do not attempt to make him a presbyterian, which, if there be any difference in such sectarists, is the worst among them.

Your apology for not touching upon news was certainly flimsy and ill-founded. The worthy gentleman who had the honour of your letter, and to whom you referred me for information of that kind is too well known to us, both as a wholesale and retail dealer in forgery and falsehood to be much relied on for truth and fact, which there was the greater necessity for your communicating, that I might be prepared to detect and explode his factitious intelligence, which, you may easily

guess, was too diffuse not to comprehend every individual of his Stockton acquaintance. But you will be satisfied, as I knew my man, I proportioned my degree of credit accordingly, and I am certain that there is little need of my giving you a hint to moderate your faith in his extraordinary relations with the same degree of caution.

I understand, from much better authority, that you have been for some time turning your thoughts towards the land of Matrimony. I have had a slight intimation of the vessel you purpose to embark in. I much approve your choice, and heartily wish you a clear sky, a brisk gale, and a speedy arrival in the port of your destination, where that, every comfort and happiness which those celebrated regions are supposed capable of affording may be your lot, through the longest life, is the sincere wish . . . of

Your old and affectionate friend,
and humble servant,
J. Ritson.

XII.

To the Editor.

My little Fellow, Grays Inn, 1st April, 1781.

I have received your letters, and other favours, for which I hold myself much indebted to

you. You write well enough, with a little pains, to enable you to write much better, which you must steadily endeavour to do. Your efforts in painting, I am not so much at liberty to commend; but, not to discourage you, I really think you show a little genius that way, which time and future attempts may considerably improve. I have a few books, some prints, and a small collection of paint-shells and camel-hair pencils, which I thought to have troubled Mr. Christopher with, but the parcel is rather too large not to be inconvenient to him, and I will, therefore, take the first opportunity (in a few days) of dispatching it to the wharf, whence you may expect it by the first or second ship....

You will give my love to your mother, and tell her I will write to her in a few days; and by the ship which brings your parcel I shall, perhaps, send another letter to you. Being in a little haste at present, I subscribe myself

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

XIII.

To the Same.

My little Fellow, Grays Inn, 27th April, 1781.

You at length receive what, if I had not been indisposed for this fortnight, or three weeks past, would have come to your hands much sooner. I have, according to your request, sent you a pair of compasses, to which I have added a black lead pencil. I have made you a small collection of paints, and picked out a few camel-hair pencils. The prints are mostly such as I was very fond of when I was rather older than you are; and the drawing book I still think a very pretty one. I would not advise you to attempt colouring any of the prints, because, you know, if you don't succeed, they are spoiled for ever; whereas they will serve you to draw from as long as you live, and you can paint your own performances as much, and as often as you please. I would rather counsel you to buy little *black shows*, (such as Cats Castle, &c.) and beginning with colouring them, you may, in time, be sure of improving something better, especially if you were to have some regular instruc-

tions, which it is soon enough yet for you to think of. You will find that almost every colour (properly speaking) such as scarlet, green or yellow, has a darker shell along with it, which serves it for a shade, and this the dark sides of figures in a print will 'teach' you the use of. For, from the specimens you sent me, it does not appear you know any thing about the matter.

I have inclosed you a few books, but those which I have marked prove such as I cannot now get. But I may now and then lay hold of one or two by chance. I would have got you Don Quixote (which is one of the best books ever written) but I did not think it so necessary, as I had desired Mr. Christopher to send you the Novelists Magazine, publishing in numbers, wherein you will (in time) have that and every other novel, of any merit in the English language. And I hope you will not only have the abilities to read, and the sense to understand them, but grace enough for the good actions and moral lessons, which you will every where find, to make a proper impression upon you. If you make this (and it is the right) use of them, novels and romances are not only the most pleasing, but the most instructive books that can be put into your hands, young or old. Above all things let me intreat

you to remember that no person is great or worthy, but as he is good and virtuous; and that, humanity and good nature are the first and highest virtues that the mind of man is capable of entertaining, and they are such as would do honour to angels. There are, indeed, many other good qualities which you ought to possess, and I hope you will not be without them. I shall only mention one or two. Delicacy (that is, a pretty obliging manner) in your language and conversation; neatness in your clothes, and cleanness in your hands and face, which never lose the skin by too much washing. That some part of this instruction may come with the better grace, I have sent it attended with a new hat, which you remember I promised you; and though you must be always careful not to make a rash or improper promise, whatever it be, always perform it, provided the performance of it will not do harm to any other person besides yourself. In the catalogue of your library, I do not observe you have taken notice of "Mother Gooses melody," which I sent you, and is an excellent thing. When I was speaking of virtues, I forgot to mention one which, I think, deserves every attention, and that is, The taking care of your books and papers, which, if I find in good order, it will be a great temptation to me to

increase your stock. Having nothing further to observe at present, but my wishes for your health, and a desire to hear from you soon,

I remain,

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I thought I had said every thing I intended (and I have made it a very long letter) but one point escaped my memory, which, as the observance of it may be of great consequence to you many a long year after this, (if you live) I could not close the sheet without adding it. I have, ever since I can remember, been tormented with the tooth-ach, the most violent pain one can possibly experience, and have just now (after having had almost every one drawn out of my head,) been plagued with it for this fortnight past as much as ever. Now, as I am pretty sure of what laid the foundation of this terrible disorder, (when I had no Uncle, nor any other person to advise me against it!) I wish you to prevent its attacks, which I think you may do, by a strict attention to these few particulars: 1. Never drink tea, (especially to your breakfast) nor eat sugar (at least as little as possible, and never by itself.) (Breakfasting upon bread and milk, the most wholesome

and nutritive diet you can accustom yourself to.) 2. Never hazard your teeth by attempting to crack things which you find too hard for them; and 3, Every morning, as soon as you get out of bed, or the first thing you do, rince your mouth well with cold spring water. Never neglect this for a single day. All these rules are so very simple and easy, and so much calculated for your benefit, health, and happiness, that if you do not observe them, I shall be apt to think worse of you than either you or I should wish.

To show you I am a different sort of a doctor from those fellows who are paid for advising people to do wrong, I have inclosed you half a guinea, as an inducement for you to take my advice, and do right.

XIV.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 12th July, 1781.

I should not be sorry, perhaps, that you did not answer my letters, if your time were wholly taken up by your business, or other profitable em-

ployment; but you have made such an ostentatious display, in *this here* epistle, of your quarters of lamb, and pecks of green pease, that one would almost suppose the fore part of your day was taken up in dressing your victuals, and, the latter part, in consuming them.... I thought you were in a fair way, when I last left you, of never tasting a mouthful of animal food again. Why, you were wont to subsist entirely on a bread crust, and piece of mouldy old cheese for several days together! I saw you were making a fortune fast, and was only afraid you would be starved before the business was completed; but, good heavens, what a change!—one would think you had already made up your plumb, and were contriving ways and means to squander your substance in gluttony, drunkenness, and all kinds of riotous living. You have now got upon the great horse with a witness! Could I ever have thought that my prudent and parsimonious old fellow-tramper, would have suffered such a diabolical transmogrification? But, alas! miracles will never cease!—and god knows whether I myself, who am thus preaching to you, and set such an example of temperance and humanity to all, may not be found one day or other devouring lambs and turkeys, geese and capons, and all other creatures which earth, air, or sea, can

furnish, and the luxury of the most voluptuous epicures have for these thousand years past been day by day singling out for the beastly satisfaction of their unnatural appetites! But if I have now a friend in the world who shall behold me at such a horrid repast, I hope he will remember my former sentiments, and, before I can stick *my* knife a second time in the animal I am gorging my stomach with, will stick *his* in my throat. But I will never attempt making converts, because I am sure I shall not succeed. When the most abominable vices are sanctified by religion, (forms and ceremonies I mean) laws, custom, habit, and universal practice, Virtue might preach for ever, without being able to convert a single auditor. In this blessed country of sense and freedom, indeed, she would stand a fair chance of rotting in a jail by justice, or being stoned to death by the pious inhabitants ..... And so you neither are, nor are going to be, married; [well] there was a lie afloat, then, that's all! You may, however, my small friend, do many worse things I believe. But no more at present on that head: and, "now to business."

Excepting that my sister did acquaint me, and you now write, that she has 'such a sum' in some persons hands; I profess I am entirely ignorant

of the matter. I neither know who has it, nor upon what terms; not a single circumstance of the affair. If you, and I am much pleased and thank you sincerely that you pay such kind attention to my sister and her troublesome affairs, can be of any service to her in this, you will be so good as take the same steps, or such like as you would find or think necessary if the money were your own. The woman is not, I conceive, in the best circumstances; and tho' that might have been a good reason why a person who has little to spare should not trust [it] all to one, let his or her needs be what they may, from whom there will be uncertainty, and trouble in getting it back; yet I would not for my own part do any thing to distress both or either of these people, if the matter shows any likelihood of being brought to bear by favourable and indulgent treatment; perhaps you could now obtain, if not the whole, some part, and my sister might take the rest as she could get it. But I only say this upon the supposition of every thing being fair and honest in the transaction, and by no means under an idea that my opinion is to direct, or even lead either my sister or you. Much less that it should, if followed, and, if failing, bear the blame of any mischance that might happen in consequence of its being adopted.

I repeat again, I am intirely ignorant of the business, and do fervently recommend it to you and my sister that, it should rest entirely with you, and, on whatever footing you may think fit to put it. I am sure she has reason to be happy in having the advice and assistance of a person so well skilled in business, and who has a friendship and regard for her and her connections; and I am sure she never can have the slightest cause to be dissatisfied with what you shall either advise her to, or do for her, nor to think she can have too much trust and confidence in you. To you, therefore, I commit and commend her and her affairs, being always

Your sincere friend, and humble servant,

J. RITSON.

... I have had my friend Ralph with me for some time; and, as you, I dare say believe, am perfectly satisfied of his worth, integrity, and honour. But it is inconceivable to monied men, like you, what scrapes Fortune sometimes throws "*us youth*" into.

XV.

To Robert Harrison, Esquire.

Dear Sir, Stockton, 19th October, 1781.

Inclosed herewith, by the favour of Mr. Ralph Hoar, I send you the lives of Wallace and Bruce in 'Scotish' metre, and shall be happy to learn that they afford you all the assistance and amusement you can expect or wish for. You will be in no haste to return them, as I did not want to take them up to town, and shall not be in the country before this time next year. I shall esteem it an additional favour to those I have already received from you if, at your best leisure and convenience, you will take the trouble to copy the list of knights we read in the Boldon-book, and send it to me in London. I intended, when in Durham, but forgot, to have asked if you had a list of the ecclesiastical preferments in this county, with their respective incumbents, and real (or estimated) yearly value. I would not take the liberty to apply to you for this kind of assistance did I know any other person either so able, or so ready to grant it.

With my best wishes for your health and happiness, and my compliments to Mrs. Harrison,

I remain, dear sir,

Your much obliged and

Most obedient humble servant,

J. RITSON.

XVI.

To MR. WADESON.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 14th January, 1782.

I find that a most impudent and malicious rascal has been libelling the all-accomplished inhabitants of Stockton, in a twelfpenny pamphlet. Among the rest, I perceive he has taken the liberty to pay you a very handsome compliment on your distinguished knowledge of music, which, to be sure, all the world allows is not to be paralleled. Especially in the nice distinctions between Harmony and Melody, of which you are perfect master. Well, after all, a horn for my money!

I am this moment informed the above scoundrel is caught by Tim Painter and Charles Wharton, and is to be publicly baited at the bull-ring.

next Friday in a *pate* skin. Is it true know you? * Yours sincerely,

J. Ritson.

P. S. If you send me a cheese, I wish you would remit me, at the same time, by some safe hand whose integrity you can rely on, a small barrel of the best and strongest Stockton ale, for which I will be your cheerful debtor. If I could once convince you of the horrid, unnatural crime of devouring your fellow creatures, I should long to take a family dinner with [you] and drink half a glass of your nonpareil orange punch, of which you are the best, if not the only manufacturer in the three kingdoms. Why don't you get a patent for it? But, alas! I understand that my re-appearance in Stockton streets would cost me my life! Gods mercies! my good friend, you see what 'an'.. infernal world we live in.

I know you are a real friend to his Majesty, and his Majestys Ministers, and rejoice heartily at the prosperity of your native country; I therefore sincerely congratulate you upon the late signal

* Mr. Ritson alludes to the "Stockton Jubilee," in which the characters were, generally, adapted with the most admirable precision. A *pate* is the badger.

successes of His Majestys arms in America and the West Indies; and since it has pleased god to put us into such a hopeful way, god send he may continue it.

My compliments to Mr. Sanderson; for, tho' a Custom House officer, he may live to be an honest man.

XVII.

To the Editor.

[Grays Inn, 14th January, 1782.]

My little Fellow,

I have received two letters from you, and beg your pardon that I have not noticed either before. I am glad to find you persist so heroically in a mode of living, which you will one day or other find to have been of essential service both to your body and mind, by preserving health and a good conscience, neither of which you could possibly have, if you addicted yourself to the unnatural and diabolical practice of devouring your *fellow creatures*, as *pigs* and *geese* undoubtedly are....

You continue to wash your mouth, I hope, every

morning, and drink no tea. I am to signify to you that *eggs* are henceforward to be considered as animal food, and, consequently prohibited to be eaten. You will take notice of this, and act accordingly.

I am only poor at present, or I would have sent you a New Years Gift: but if you will grow wiser and better behaved than you were when I left you, I won't forget you on the approach of better times.... I am, sir,

Your humble servant,

J. RITSON.

XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Grays Inn, 23d January, 1782.

You are a fine fellow, if you would not be so refractory and *obstropulous* as you sometimes are: a system of good behaviour which generally terminates at Tyburn. I think your last letter was better written (in point of penmanship I mean) than any thing I ever saw from you before; if you take pains, you may, in time write a very good hand. Take my advice in one point, do not

flourish quite so extravagantly. He was a fool that told you fine writing consisted in these quavers and *curlikews.*

I think that if a pudding stand before you, you are not obliged to refuse it on account of the eggs, I do not myself. But I should never *direct* a pudding to be made for me with eggs in it.*

You will one day or other think yourself much obliged to me for weaning you from tea-drinking and animal food, which I wish you to consider, what it certainly is, a barbarous and horrible manner of living, very little, if at all, inferior to that which, you either have read or will some day read is practised by the Cannibals (certain nations of savages so called from this shocking custom) the eating of human flesh! The abstinence which I recommend to you will, if you live, as I hope you shall, make you both healthful and happy. But we'll talk about these matters some other time.

By the next visit I pay to Stockton I hope you will have a book full of little verses for me to look at. Such as these, for instance:

I, thou, and he,
Caught a flea;
We, ye, and they,
Set her away.

* This, it must be allowed, is a nice distinction. Ed.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
I caught a hare alive;
6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
I let her go again.

Or this, which is vastly pretty:

When I am dead and gone,
And all my bones are rotten;
These few lines that I have wrote
Will never be forgotten.

I regret nothing so much as that I did not make a practice of committing all such little things to writing the moment I heard them. I should think you might make a penny by such a collection.

If the bishop come to Stockton this year I would advise you not to be confirmed. But if you rather incline to have his hand over your head, I shall be ready to treat with you about staying at home, upon moderate terms.

From your loving uncle
J. RITSON.

XIX.

To the Same.

My little fellow, Grays Inn, 7th March, 1782.

I am much obliged by your last letter; it is very well written, both with respect to language and penmanship. I hope you read a great deal oftener than you play, and begin to find more amusement in doing the former than the latter. You are going to Norton, and though you will not find the books there put into your hands very entertaining at present, yet if you will use your utmost endeavours to become master of them, they will be the means of your receiving not only entertainment but instruction in abundance hereafter. Adieu! Be a good boy! Mind your book! Improve your writing! Be good natured and obedient!

Your affectionate uncle

J. Ritson.

XX.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, March, 1782.

I had your favour of the 3d inst and received the box of bottled ale a few days afterwards. . . .

I hold myself exceedingly obliged to you for the great trouble you must have had in procuring and packing the ale, every bottle of which was safe and sound, and not less so for the substantial delicacy which accompanied it. The ale appears to be somewhat too new so that we have not yet had a fair set to at it, but when that is the case— "heaven and earth may pass away"—but that evening shall not pass away without a grateful remembrance of the person to whom we shall be beholden for the pleasure of it.

I understand that Joe is gone to Norton school, and I thank you much for the care and pains you have taken with him. You will be kind enough to continue a friendly eye to his behaviour.

Mr. Crathorne esteems the readiness with which you have despatched the important business of his bushel of acorns as a very great favour. You will debit me for the whole of your charge, which in in my opinion is most unreasonably small.

You will before this I suppose, have heard of the dismission of those miscreant blockheads who formed the late infamous administration, some of whom it is to be hoped will yet hop headless. You'll see more in time. The national ship is now without either pilot or officers, there not being a minister in place. A mutiny among the

crew is every moment expected. However I think you may begin to prepare yourself for a trip to the Netherlands. Peace! Peace! will be the undoubted blessing of the new government. In which event I may hope to see you sooner than we expected: it cannot be sooner than I wish. In the mean time if I can be of any kind of service to you here your commands will give pleasure to

Your sincere friend
and obliged humble servant
J. RITSON.

You won't, I see, forget Toff and the hat race. It was an omen of future good fortune and you are only mad that you did not start yourself.

Not being able to send my letters to Christopher on saturday night for want of a cover, I can now perhaps give you the earliest information of the arrangement of the *New Ministry* which is as follows:

Marquis of Rockingham,	First Lord of the Treasury.
Earl of Shelburne, } CHARLES FOX, }	Secretaries of State.
Duke of Richmond,	Master of the Ordnance.
Lord Camden,	Lord President of the Council.
Duke of Grafton,	Lord Privy Seal.
General Conway,	Commander in Chief.
Admiral Keppel,	First Lord of the Admiralty.
Lord John Cavendish,	Chancellor of the Exchequer.

All men of approved abilities and integrity—the.

ablest heads and soundest hearts. We may now begin to hope for the representation of a New Comedy called, "*The Blessings of the Constitution restored.*"

If this intelligence does not send you to the ale-house and make you damn'd drunk, there is neither spirit nor honesty in you. You may set out for Holland as soon as you please.

XXI.

To Mrs. Frank.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 12th April, 1782.

I have indeed too much reason to complain of the times; but I am far more sorry for it on your account than my own. I must have patience—and truly I both have, and have made a great use of it, though it is much against my nature. You are very commendable in living with the utmost œconomy, which is doubtless a great virtue; I only wish it was more a matter of choice with you, but do not pinch yourself beyond what propriety or necessity requires, and if you be out of money, let me know immediately. I fancy you live as you

did when I was down; *I* would not, for my own part, wish to live better, and I shall be sorry to hear that *you* live worse. You will certainly find yourself healthier, and if you have either conscience or humanity, happier, in abstaining from animal food than you could possibly be in depriving, by the indulgence of an unnatural appetite and the adherence to a barbarous custom, hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent creatures of their lives, to the enjoyment of which they have as good a right as yourself.

I am very glad to hear of Joes alacrity and cheerfulness in going to school. I will write to him soon. From your affectionate brother

J. RITSON.

XXII.

TO THE EDITOR.

MY LITTLE FELLOW, Grays Inn, 30th April, 1782.

The alacrity and resolution you have shown in going to Norton in spite of wind and weather does you as much credit as it gives me pleasure. The early hour at which you set out, and the exercise you take in travelling backwards and forwards, will I dare say, prove of the utmost advantage to

your health. The same daily labours in your book will produce equal benefit to your mind. I have got, and send you inclosed, a Nomenclator or Vocabulary which I take to be the book you want. Mr. Christopher will, on my account, furnish you with every other you may have occasion for; and you will remember some classics in the fore-room closet which you will make use of when you have arrived so high. I will in a few days send you the hat I promised, and if you will be a good scholar and a fine boy nothing in my power shall be denied to gratify any wish you can form.

Your affectionate uncle

J. RITSON.

If this Nomenclator should not be right you must let me have the title of that which you want.

XXIII.

To MRS. FRANK.

DEAR SISTER, Grays Inn, 7th June, 1782.

I am informed you are, and have for sometime past been, very ill, which I am exceedingly sorry

to hear. You cannot give me a more acceptable proof of your affection for, and wishes to oblige me, than by taking every possible care you can of yourself, and avoiding or neglecting nothing that will in the smallest degree contribute to your health or comfort. I understand that you are advised to drink wine and eat animal food, both which, it seems, you refuse, wherein I think you very much to blame. Wine is so perfectly innocent that I cannot see why you should have the least objection to it; and though I look upon animal food as a thing prohibited by the moral law, to persons in good health, yet I neither can nor ought to retain the same opinion of it when it becomes, or is thought, necessary to the preservation of life. I hardly wished and never expected that my scruples on this head would influence you so far as to make you give up the mode of living to which you have been always accustomed. Certainly not that you would resolve to deny yourself what every body about you, nay even almost the whole world, eats without concern or reflection, when your very existence might perhaps depend upon it. I shall not weary you with further argument. I only hope and desire that as you relinquished the use of this food out of complaisance to me as a philosopher, you will now

revive it out of affection for me as a brother. I sincerely wish you a speedy recovery, of which I beg to be immediately advertised. Let Joe write to me soon. I have had a short visit from a kind of epidemical disorder to which most people here have been more or less subject, and which, for want of a more sensible name, they call the *Influenza*. But I am at present perfectly well, as I would be very glad that this letter might find you.

Your affectionate brother

J. RITSON.

XXIV.

To MR. WADESON.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 7th June, 1782.

Nothing gives me a more pleasurable and heartfelt satisfaction than the attention you pay to this poor sister of mine, and the little urchin her son: nor can any thing tend so effectually to relieve the impatience and anxiety I ever feel on considering their lonely and defenceless situation, than your benevolent and friendly conduct, which I flatter myself you will still continue.

I did not expect my sister would have adopted

my *anti-canibalical* principles so readily, or carried them so far. But, although I do not conceive the use of animal food at all necessary to our existence or health, nor even lawful (I mean upon the idea of moral obligation) in any possible case which would not justify the privation of human life, yet, as I would not willingly have it said, that my foolish prejudices had been my sisters destruction, I have written to desire that she will eat and drink whatever dr. Milburne may advise ....

These confounded Froglanders, you see, will not make peace with us:—The war will, for the future, be owing to them, and we must beat them into a more tractable and pacific temper. The dogs are far more stubborn than I took them to be.

You have now a proper season for associating in arms for the defence of your country, and I hope you will shew a more general and noble spirit than you did before. If you stand forth as armed citizens, you will deserve honour and respect. It is the duty of every man. But if you assume the character and manners of a partial military force, confounding the parade and distinctions of mercenaries with the dignified spirit of an English freeman, the sooner you are put an end to the better.

I am, dear Mat, your sincere friend
and obliged humble servant,
J. Ritson.

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XXV.

To the Same.

'Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 27th June, 1782.

Jack Rowntree, who comes to avail himself of the favorable opportunity given him to fix in Stockton, by the death of his old master, will do me the pleasure to deliver you this note. I well know that your friendship and good wishes prompted you to think of me and my former inquiries. But times and circumstances are so much changed since I made them, that it is impossible for me, now, to think of altering my situation, as Rowntree is every way qualified to prevent Mr. Reeds loss, as a professional man, from being felt by his clients and the public: and I doubt not that the prospect, which is certainly most flattering, will every day become more satisfactory and interesting. I need not wish you to use your influence and endeavours in his favour.

I understand that you are turned fresh water pirate, and make a practice of poisoning the poor natives of the Tees. I should not, indeed, be very glad to hear that you were choked with a chevins rib, or thigh bone, but I beg leave to add that, if such an unfortunate accident should happen to

you, no one of your friends will have it in their power to say that you did not deserve it. I wish to hear better things of you; and, with my best wishes, after a speedy and effectual reformation, for your health and happiness,

I remain,

Your sincere friend and
humble servant,

J. RITSON.

XXVI.

To JOHN RUSSELL ROWNTREE, ESQUIRE.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 19th July, 1782.

I am not only sorry, but surprised to find you in want of what I should have been apt to imagine would be the first thing to offer itself. With respect to the front room of my capital mansion-house in Silver-street, your decision upon its imaginary convenience may have been too hasty. But let that be as it may, I am persuaded that you take me, for more reasons than one,—as well, I mean, with regard to the numerous civilities I received from your very respectable family, as to your own personal merits, to have your interest so

much at heart that I would eagerly embrace every opportunity within the extremest verge of my power to render you the least considerable service. The fee-simple of this house is not, for aught I know, worth thirty shillings; and yet, I protest, I would not dismember it, in the way you propose, for fifty times its value. No, not even to oblige the Mayor and Aldermen of Stockton. When I tell you, therefore, that you may turn the said front room into an office, you will recollect that you are the only person in England to whom I either would or could say so. *You* are, however, welcome to it; as to what pecuniary return you may think the use of it entitled, *that* will entirely belong to my sister, with whom you will please to settle all further arrangements.

From your not having deigned to notice the rival confederacy, it is not, I flatter myself, altogether so formidable as has been represented. But the opposition of Mr. Wardell will, I fear, prove a stumbling block you can never surmount.

I am sorry that I shall not have the pleasure of joining the huzza at your launch, and drinking a pot of ale to your prosperous voyage. I set off to morrow morning for Cambridge, where I shall spend a few weeks: and, if nothing momentous call me to town, shall most likely penetrate fur-

ther into the country, which will, I suppose, consume a few more; and the sum total, I conclude, will pretty nearly wind up the long vacation.

Crathorne thinks that, from your not having honoured him with a line since you left town, you suspect him to be upon too intimate terms with *the Opposition.*

You may venture to assure Mr. Rowntree that I will take the earliest opportunity of sending him the Italian Dictionary; and to him and Mrs. Rowntree, and to your amiable and all-accomplished sisters, you will be pleased to present my most grateful acknowledgements for the honour they do me. Adieu! believe me,

with my heartiest wishes
for your best success,
Yours sincerely,
J. RITSON.

P. S. Pray do you mean to sport, in blue and gold, "ROWNTREE, *Attorney and Solicitor, from London. Conveyancing in all its branches, with the utmost expedition, and at the cheapest rate?*"

XXVII.

To Mr. Harrison.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, 6th Augt. 1782.

This letter I trust will find you perfectly recovered from the fatigue and derangement of your long journey. Indeed, I am afraid, you will be apt to think that I have allotted time enough for the cure. I certainly, by the way, intended to have acknowledged the receipt of your favour from Pauls Walden, but you were flown into the North before I could write my letter. But now to business.

You will, in the first place, when you next see or send to Mr. Hutchinson, desire him to add the name of "Ralph Hoar, Esq. Lincolns Inn," to the List of Subscribers to his famous History, which I flatter myself will not be a little indebted to your researches, discoveries, and judicious communications.

I do not exactly know in what public office the mayors of Durham and Stockton are registered, but I should be very glad to have a list of them if it can be procured.

The sheriffs office will, I suppose, afford a catalogue of those officers, for which, if you do not find it too troublesome, and have no better employment, I should be everlastingly obliged to you.

You purposed to look at the original of Bishop Beks Charter for Stockton fair, or rather, I believe, the Mayor of Newcastles letter, in the Chancery Office. The former is not long, and I feel myself extremely desirous to have an accurate copy of it.

In the Auditors Office, I believe, (to the best of my remembrance Mr. Allan told me so) is the ancient Charter creating Stockton a Borough, or Corporation. If that Office ever throw itself in your way, shall I beg the favour of you to make the inquiry?

I ask your pardon for not returning the paper, or papers you left with me. I shall take up my *Villare* some of these days, when I shall make the necessary use of them, and dispatch them to you.

I have been lately at Cambridge, where I saw a great many curious books, made a great many important discoveries: and, what is better than all, became intimately acquainted with Dr. Farmer, whom I found a most sensible, liberal, benevolent and worthy man.

In the Maitland MS. (an old collection, you

know, of Scotish poetry) I met with the original ballad by king James I. of Scotland, beginning *At Beltayn,* being one of the two mentioned by John Major.

You one day dropped a hint, as if it were not impracticable to have a sight of Lord Hyndfords MS. without going to Edinburgh, (where I see very little probability of my getting in haste.) If you think the use and pleasure it will afford, outweigh the hazard of conveyance, I should feel the utmost happiness in examining it. I have had many MSS. from Cambridge of equal, or greater value, to which no accident ever happened. But there is some difference, indeed, with respect to place and time.

You see, sir, I use very little ceremony in the number and magnitude of the favours I ask. I only desire you would impose tasks upon me in return an hundred fold.

I am, dear sir,

Your very sincere and
affectionate humble servant,
J. RITSON.

P. S. I have at last put my libel upon Warton into the hands of a bookseller. It is in a fair way of seeing the light by Christmas. I am afraid I

must give up your remark about the "wine or cyder;" we examined two different MSS. of Wyckliffe, in the Pepysian library, in one of which we found *syper*, and in the other, *sedyr*.

You will take the trouble to look at page 175, vol. i. and Emend. and Add. sign. d, c, vol. 2. I think your derivation of *Oriel* won't stand.

Haberdasher, my friend Hoar has heard, is a corruption of *Heb'u das heer*, (Have this, sir!) the cry of the merchants at Frankfort fair.

Pray what is the title of your old Jest Book?

XXVIII.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 28th Sep. 1782.

I write at a mere conjecture; I know not whether you be upon earth, in heaven, or in the lower regions. But, wherever you are, I trust you enjoy a good warm birth. Well, and how do you do? and how is your hobby-horse? or, rather the whole stud; for I know you seldom ride single? What! no peace with Holland yet! Pray what is your opinion of the ministry now?

But I remember, your principal tenet is, that a Minister, like a King, can never do wrong. Well, mark the end: you will see pretty combustions shortly....

My compliments to Mr. Sanderson, and O for the time when we shall next crush a pot of ale together!

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

XXIX.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR,

You prove your etymologies beyond the possibility of either doubt or cavil: I discard *Leemouth* for ever.

I understand *Kerlie Merlie* to have been the words peculiarly used by Mr. Strutt in his business: but I do not know their meaning, nor do I think they ever had any. What is *Caurymaury*?

> Envy with hevy hart, asked after shryft,
> Clothed in *Caurymaury*, I can it not discrive.
>
> P. P. (passus v.)

It was the manner of Portias death I was en-

quiring after: but I have since looked into Bayle, who says little about her, and only quotes Valerius Maximus. I suppose however Valerius Maximus is a writer of sufficient authority to establish the fact.

What say you to my scurrilous libel against Tom Warton? and when do you return to town?

I have just put my attack upon Johnson and Steevens into the press. I will turn the world upside down. Yours sincerely

Grays Inn, 8th October, 1782. J. RITSON.

XXX.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 8th November, 1782.

MY LITTLE FELLOW,

I am glad to hear such good accounts of you, because I flatter myself you deserve them. At your book you cannot possibly be too assiduous; and if you have leisure and capacity sufficient to enable you to master the violin, I shall be happy to afford you every requisite assistance in my power.... Be so good as pay attention to the

spelling and writing of your words. You should begin all proper names (" norton" for instance) with a capital letter; all others with a small one, except after a full stop. Remember this. I suppose that by *following my advice,* you mean that you eat no meat, drink no tea, wash your mouth, and receive your 6d a month. The three first articles will, I am confident (if you live) be of the most essential advantage to you; and I trust you will not so carelessly apply the last as to make me repent the bargain; which is the sincere wish of

" Sir, with the greatest respect
Your humble servant"
J. Ritson.

XXXI.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, November, 1782.

As Clarke tells me he shall leave town to day and I shall have no other opportunity of seeing him, I can just seize a moment to intreat your good offices in remembering me to every individual of the good family over the way. To answer your request: I have but one edition of Shakspeare, and that, I am sure, is not fit to go out of

my chambers; where you are heartily welcome to come and read it as soon and as long as you please: twenty years hence I shall probably have it in my power to *give* you an edition of the immortal bard. In the mean time, if you cannot content yourself to wait quite so long, you will be able to accommodate yourself with a Scotch or Irish impression at the shop of R. Christopher, bookseller in Stockton, who is a very honest fellow and will not charge you more than five or six times the value of it. Yours sincerely

J. RITSON.

XXXII.

TO THE EDITOR.

YOUNG FELLOW, Grays Inn, 13th March, 1783.

In the Constant, Captain Terry, is a small box of books (directed to your mother) of which I hope you will take great care and make a good use. I am glad to find that any thing I have said makes the least impression on you. I never hear whether you regularly receive your sixpence a month or whatever else was agreed on. Though I conclude that every thing is right from your not making any complaints. You are by this time,

I flatter myself, fully sensible that the system you were hired to pursue has been productive of much greater benefit than the money you stipulated for. I do not, however, repent of, nor have I the least desire to recede from my part of the agreement. But I must hope you can give a good account of the expenditure of your little salary, or I may have been doing you more harm than I intended to do you good. Let me recommend a short lesson to your consideration: charity and benevolence have a much stronger claim upon a person than the superfluous indulgence of his own appetite. Never hesitate between a beggar and a halfpenny-worth of nuts. I know not whether by adopting this maxim you may (as the Scripture says) "lay up treasure in heaven," but this I am sure of, that the relish of a good action will continue longer and be a thousand times more grateful than that of an apple. Finally, whatever you do, never affect singularity or ostentation. To be modest, open, ingenuous and unassuming in your manner, just and true in your conduct, and generous and humane in your disposition, is the only character you should aim at, as it is the highest commendation you can ever receive.

Your affectionate uncle

J. RITSON.

XXXIII.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 15th March, 1783.

If it were not for the information I have received from your emigrating friends, and from two pair of cheeses which I was told came from you, and for which I, therefore, return you my hearty thanks, I should long before this have concluded that your head was laid some three feet under water in Stockton church-yard. It seems, however, that you are yet alive and as busy, as restless and as hobbyhorsical as ever. And while you can dress your flax, keep your accounts, and have the supreme pleasure of deafening a few half-witted weavers over a pint of ale with your cursed bum-bumming* which I vow and protest was almost enough to drive me distracted, I do not suppose that you care a farthing if all the friends and acquaintance you have in the world were gone to the devil. I have sent letters and messages to you I know not how frequently, without being able to get a single word out of you, and don't

* Alluding to his friends performance on the bassoon. Ed.

flatter myself I shall succeed a bit better upon the present occasion. O thou *heckler*, thou *thropeler!* May thy wind fail thee in the midst of thy favorite solo at the next concert! And mayest thou feel as awkward and be as infernally mad as thou wert when thou madest thy unsuccessful appearance as an auctioneer at Mrs. Moats sale, the unworthy substitute of *Jack Curwen!* Thou everlasting disgrace to the ancient and illustrious house of Wadeson of Yafforth!

I should conjecture from your former declarations that you would be thinking of a trip to Holland this summer; will that be the case? And do you purpose to take London in your way, going or returning? I am uncertain whether I shall find, or be able to make, it convenient to see you at Stockton this next long vacation. But I need no other inducement than the pleasure of drinking a tankard of ale and eating my share of a pan of toasted cheese with you and two or three honest fellows of our old fellowship. My Hartlepool estate, I fancy, is sunk into the earth, or the houses are empty, or the tenants insolvent. Render up an account of thy stewardship, thou—just steward! Adieu! Believe me Your sincere friend and humble servant

J. RITSON.

XXXIV.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, 29th November, 1783.

I am under infinite obligations to you for the activity and friendship you appear to have shewn in the late alarming predicament. Inclosed is a letter to the poor fellow to gain possesion of the deed, which you will direct and send to him when and as you think proper. You ask what Ralph Hoar or I could be thinking of to be guilty of such a blunder. For my part, though I cannot well say what I was, I may be pretty certain what I was not, thinking of at the time; as I unfortunately happened to be near three hundred miles off and to know nothing at all about the matter. And as to Ralph I have some distant suspicion that he had as little concern in the matter as I had. Henry Taylors mortgage was transferred to *Mary Cook*. And who was concerned for *her*? Not your humble servant: not Ralph Hoar. No; it was no less a person than your wise master Benjamin Reed and his infallible clerk J. R. Rowntree. So much for that. With respect to the pig-stye I don't know

what to say. To the best of my remembrance there was once a hovel of some kind on the spot you mention; but that's nothing: if you be satisfied that I am intitled to an eaves drop (I think you call it) you have my full authority to demolish the fabrick, which, indeed, you may do whether you be or not. I am now convinced of my error in not having paid proper court to the doctor. Next time I come down, I will be drunk with him three or four days together.

Bevan told me he would answer your letter, though he scarcely knew how. I suppose it is some damned piece of impertinence or other which would be most properly answered by taking its writer by the—hand.

The delay in our prosecution (of the postmaster) is at present entirely occasioned by Mr. Chambres not having settled the declaration. The defendant may exult as much as he pleases: he will find in the long run "although we seemed dead we did but sleep." The assizes wont be lost if the term is.

Mr. Prissick is so good as to take the charge of the remaining Will-book. You seem to be as foolishly eager of amassing precedents as this poor ideot P. who can do nothing in the world else. Mr. Osgoode has not yet returned the points. When he does so you shall hear of it.

You seem cursedly vexed that you have lost an opportunity to behave like a damned honest attorney. Copies honestly come by are a thousand times more eligible than swindled originals. Lies and knavery have wonderful attractions with some people. For your part you have got a couple of ears, let me advise you to keep them.

Your sincere well-wisher

J. RITSON.

XXXV.

To MR. WADESON.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 30th November, 1783.

I am much obliged by your kind favour of the 15th instant, and congratulate you on your safe arrival at Old Stockton. I should have been very happy to have had you here for a day or two, and am the more sorry I could not enjoy that pleasure as we were deprived of you by sickness; which, however, seems to have left you on once more snuffing your native air. The unwholesome reeking stench of those damned fens and ditches in the frog-inhabited country you have been in is

enough I should imagine to suffocate an Englishman that has not the constitution of a horse.

My interview at Norton confirmed the favorable sentiments I had imbibed for the worthy and respectable family. I am only sorry I could not prevail on Joes mother to come to any terms with me for the young varlets board. I was obliged to refer the matter over to you; and I wish you, who can manage every thing of the nature of business, by familiar methods to which I am a total stranger, would endeavour to fix upon some adequate compensation for their trouble and kindness. I am sure, let it be what it would, we should still think ourselves under infinite obligations to them.

We were always disposed to make proper allowances for the multiplicity of your important concerns; and your company when we were fortunate enough to obtain it was the more valued on account of its rarity.

Soon after you went off Mr. Bradley desired to confer with me on the subject of your difference with Dr. Walker. But as both our opinions and our facts were altogether irreconcileable it is no wonder that we should come to no agreement. He however, seemed to think me not unreasonable in proposing that both parties should endeavour to obtain evidence in writing as to the ancient state

of the water-course, so that one might at least have *admitted facts* to form a conclusive judgment from. This, you see, would be a process of little trouble and no expence and might probably, if the dispute continue, save a journey to Durham. But let what will be the event and which way soever the law may turn out to be in Dr. Walkers favour, as, at the time of each purchase, things were just in the same situation in which they are at present and were not then known to either party to have been ever otherwise, I do not think that man honest who would avail himself of a quirk of law to obtain what in reason and justice he can possibly have no right to.

Be so good as present my heartiest complimentary remembrances to "my good worthy honest friends" Messrs. Mawlam and Sanderson. The latter I hear is paying his addresses to his old favorite the widow. He has my best wishes for his success. I am, dear Mat,

Most sincerely and faithfully yours

J. RITSON.

XXXVI.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, 27th January, 1784.

Before this reaches you, I imagine you will have received a copy of the declaration from Bevan. You will perceive that we have changed our ground, and perhaps he may have told you the reason which was (lest he should not) a doubt of Mr. Chambres that as ours would have been the first action of the kind, as Thirkill might have been supposed to act on the idea of a right, and as the penalties imposed by the statute were very severe, and a judge might possibly take it into his head to direct the jury in his favour, a hazard it did not seem worth our while to run, more especially as the other way was broad and beaten. I hear with pleasure the increase of your business. To establish yourself at Stockton you have nothing to do but, by dint of evidence, &c. to gain a desperate cause or two, ruin two or three honest, and hang two or three innocent men, and your fortune is made. And sure I am if you only prove Captain Hemings a cuckold without his own consent you can do any thing. Yours sincerely

J. R.

XXXVII.

To Mrs. Frank.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 31 January, 1784.

I am much concerned to hear of your illness. I desire you will let yourself want for nothing that can be thought of to do you good. When you have occasion for money you need only send down to Mr. Christopher, who will readily advance it for me. But I beg you would not only take care of yourself but keep up your spirits and endeavour to get better by thinking you are so. I suspect you invite, or at least nourish and promote, these complaints by fretting about things which you have no business to trouble yourself with. I wish you would find out some better employment for your thoughts. I have frequently assured you, and, if it afford you any consolation, will again repeat, that, let what will happen, I shall always treat Joe, in every respect, as my own child. I will do all in my power to fix him in a reputable and advantageous situation, which I trust you will have the satisfaction to see, and see him long continue in. I shall be happy to learn the restoration of your

health, which that you may for many, many years uninterruptedly enjoy is the earnest and sincere wish of Your affectionate brother

J. RITSON.

XXXVIII.

To MR. WADESON.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 5th February, 1784.

You will readily believe that I do not hear of my sisters danger without uneasiness. I should have a heavy miss of her, and her death would be a severe stroke indeed upon the poor little fellow her son. Your letters give me more reason to fear than to hope; a little time, therefore, I imagine will determine the event. In this state of concern and anxiety, however, I assure you I cannot but feel the kind and friendly attention you pay to both my sister and myself with the utmost gratitude and satisfaction. You may depend upon it I shall never forget the obligation your conduct on this as well as many other occasions lays me under to you; and it shall not be want of inclination if I do not otherwise appear sensible of it than in words. You will be so good as (when your

leisure or convenience serves) to give an eye to the situation of this poor distressed girl, and procure her such assistance as you think her in need of. And if she be not to live, can I ask you, for indeed there is no one else I can apply to, to burthen yourself with that last sad office she has to require of us? I put your friendship to a severe trial: a trial from which you can have no other reward than a grateful heart on my side and the consciousness of having done a benevolent action on your own. I thought it necessary to add so much, as supposing the event were to happen I should not be able to hear of it and write to you in time. It would have given me great comfort to have had it in my power to inclose you a remittance to defray the unavoidable expence on these occasions; but I have the mortification to be totally unprepared. If it be inconvenient for you to disburse what is necessary for the present, Christopher, I dare say, will not be displeased at any application of the kind. And as to such things as there may be occasion to take up at the shops, my credit may surely satisfy them for a few months. It would be necessary to say much more, perhaps, and speak very differently to any one besides yourself; but I place such a perfect confidence in your judgment and friendship that I should rather be

apprehensive of having said too much. Either way, I am assured of your excuse. You will not neglect my best thanks to A. nor hesitate to believe me,

Dear Mat,

Your much obliged and ever faithful friend and servant

J. Ritson.

XXXIX.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Grays Inn, 7th February, 1784.

Dear Rowntree,

It is somewhat strange that you and your agent should so little understand each other. I have not been able to see him since I received your letter; nor indeed was there any necessity I should, as I recollect perfectly his telling me that Thirkill had appeared, and that, since filing the declaration, his solicitor had taken out a summons for time to plead. I cannot hear from you too often; but I would be much obliged to you to treat this matter of mine as ordinary business, and let me have as little trotting after Mr. Bevan as possible.

I thank you sincerely for the kind and friendly

manner in which you communicate my sisters danger. I have just had a letter from Joe, who acquaints me that she is something better. I shall be happy to hear of her recovery; but do not conceive that I am either so womanish or so childish as not to take even the worst tidings in the best part.

Be so good as to tender my most grateful acknowledgments to Mrs. and Miss Rowntree, for their attentive concern on this melancholy occasion. Such is indeed the office of friendship; but how few do we find to perform it! I am not much given to praying, but they may be assured that their health and happiness shall ever be amongst the first wishes of my heart. With my best compliments to Mr. Rowntree, to whom I purposed writing which I am solely prevented doing through want of time,

I remain, dear Jack,
Yours sincerely
J. RITSON.

XL.

To Mrs. Frank.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 17th February, 1784.

I flatter myself with hopes that this letter will find you, if not perfectly recovered, at least in a fair way of being so. Let me intreat you to take proper nourishment; and to banish all anxiety and low-spiritedness, to which I in a great measure attribute your disease. You should think of nothing but how to make yourself happy and comfortable. I keep very well, and have only the frost to complain of for confining me so much within doors. It has been excessively severe, and has continued, as people say, for eleven weeks.

Joe tells me he behaves with great propriety, and gives the utmost satisfaction in the new office your illness has conferred upon him: I shall be glad to find every body else of the same opinion. Adieu, dear sister, and make much of yourself; what would become of us, think you, if we lost you? Your affectionate brother,

J. Ritson.

XLI.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, 17th February, 1784.

I did not get your letter on Saturday in time enough to answer it by that nights post, being engaged out the greatest part of the evening. Relying on the hopes you give me I have written a few lines to my sister, and shall expect in a day or two to have your observations confirmed. I have not the least dislike to her making a will, though I must confess I do not perceive the inconvenience which you tell me would of course ensue from her dying intestate. However, as it appears to have been satisfactory to herself, and to have been advised "with a good motive" (the first time, perhaps, you ever had such an excuse to offer) I am perfectly agreeable.

One story's good, they say, till another's told. Your clients, I will do you the justice to believe, can lye no faster than you can swear. But you seem to forget that the judge and jury generally have the curiosity to hear both sides. You will find it no difficult matter perhaps to black-ball

Sam S. but if you can white-wash Mr. H. you'll be a clever fellow indeed. Apropos; have you got a sufficient number of *credible witnesses?* There are a few devilish good hands in that line hereabouts, which I fancy you might have pretty reasonable. N. B. I assure you I have no interest in this proposal myself, as I belong to a quite different gang.

I would not act the part of an attorney for you nor any man: but I have no objection to get your deeds executed as that is not inconsistent with honesty.

I am glad to hear you will be so profitably employed. I always said you would get forward—ay and keep what you get too. But notwithstanding both your employment and your profit I do insist on your copying me the air and words of the Scotish song I desired, from the book I gave you on that express condition.

Yours sincerely
J. RITSON.

XLII.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Dear Mat, Grays Inn, 24th February, 1784.

As to the doyleys (not "*dowlas*")—you will be so kind as send me four dozen more—I don't know how many a web contains—but half a dozen or so, under or over, will make little difference.

My sister, I learn, is in a fair way of doing well again, which I am very happy to hear, as nothing distresses me so much as the sickness or death of those with whom I am any way connected.

For want of a cover to you, I am obliged to transmit this *via* Christopher, but you won't like it the worse, I know, for coming through the hands of an honest man.

Your brother, I find, has used me worse than his wife, child, mother, brother, creditors and all together. He has spoiled my helmet, and burnt my lance-shaft! The fellow has certainly been possessed with a devil!

I am almost, and have reason enough to be altogether, ashamed of the liberty I take, in troubling you upon so many occasions. Your patience is great, I know, but not inexhaustible. Shall I,

however, once more beg the favour of you to furnish me with a couple of cheeses; "savoury meat such as your friend loveth." My *ale* I procure from a different quarter; and, for the honour of Stockton, I should be loth to inform you how much superior it is to any produced of late in that once famed metropolis of malt. Alas! alas! "How are the mighty fallen!" dear Mat,

Ever sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

XLIII.

To Mr. Rowntree.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 3d March, 1784.

Captain Ware called on me this morning with your ingrossments, which I have put up, in order to be returned to you when opportunity offers, duly executed and attested. It would be in vain for criticism, envy, or malice, to seek defects in the handywork of the infallible Mr. Rowntree. We have to learn, I find, not to teach: to correct our own errors, not to display his. I should not, I confess, have thought it necessary to make Mr. Stephenson a party, or to recite (in the conveyance) the will of George Ware. Nor should I have done what I called other people fools

for doing; lest those who next look into the matter, should pronounce me not a jot wiser than my predecessors. I shall know better for the future; confident that so illustrious an example will shield my practice from censure.

It has been frequently said that fools make knaves; it is equally true, I believe, that credulity is the parent of falsehood. These may look like paradoxes: the *cause* being usually taken for the *effect*. Nothing, however, can be more just; as, I dare say, my friend Christopher, "a man of *credit* and *reputation*, can testify." For what is it that makes him so thoroughly addicted to that most infamous and detestable of vices, lying? What but the avidity, do you think, with which such like sagacious characters as J. R. Rowntree, swallow the wildest and most gross and palpable absurdities the fertility of his romantic imagination can supply? A word to the wise is enough; to the other-wise, too much.

You need not, my dear Sir, have added a syllable further upon the subject of the will. I am well assured you proposed it with the best design in the world; and, though the inconvenience you suggest could never have been felt by *me*, I should be very ungrateful not to thank you for the attention you have shewn to my interest in the proceeding.

The 3d volume of P. Wms. is scarce, and I don't exactly know what a reasonable price for it is: but, if you think proper, I will direct Whieldon to get it for you as low as he can: I could come at it no other way if I wanted it ever so much, unless by a mere accident.

I do not take your sly hint in favour of the musical society at all amiss. I remember well enough that "some person or other," took the liberty to desire me to send them the overture you allude to, (there is some *leetle* difference, you will recollect, between an *overture* and an *opera*); but that I promised to do so, is a part of the story which, as you may very goodnaturedly observe, it was my interest to forget. I therefore humbly move your Honour, that the further consideration of this matter may be postponed till a future day.

There is nothing, I apprehend, in my cause, which will either require or admit a special jury: nor am I sure that I would be inclined to have one if there were. The case you mention, I should think, must have been attended with circumstances different from the Bath and Ipswich questions, or have gone off upon some other ground than the merits. In 1775, an action was brought against the postmaster of Newcastle, *upon the Statute of Q. Ann;* but I have not yet learned what became of it. I flatter myself you intend to relieve me

from the trouble of preparing my brief. The letters, and whatever other assistance you may want, I shall send you when you write.

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

XLIV.

To MRS. FRANK.

Grays Inn, 16th March, 1784.

DEAR SISTER,

I should have been much pleased to find that your illness, so far from impairing your strength, had not left a trace upon your memory. But I hope it will be a very short time before you have entirely forgot it. I have no services for you; I only want you to live, and make yourself happy. It was certainly very considerate and attentive in Rowntree to put you in mind of leaving a will; and as I imagine it afforded you some satisfaction, I was not sorry to hear he had made the proposal. As to the house, the difficulty he foresaw was purely ideal: I have no thoughts, nor, I dare to say, ever shall have any, of parting with it: so that, had we unfortunately lost you, it would not have been of a farthings consequence, nor made the

slightest difference, either to me or Joe; whether you had left a will or not.

I send you the silk (at least, I suppose I shall, for I write before I have been in quest of it); but I trust you will make your knitting an amusement only, and not a fatigue.

My love to Joe . . .

Your affectionate brother,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I shall enter upon my office at Mayday. I expect it will bring me in about 150*l.* a year. It is a place under the crown, and I hope I shall be able to secure it for life.

XLV.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 7th April, 1784.

MY GOOD BOY, (for so I trust you are)

I shall be always glad to hear of your improvement in dancing or any thing else. But I hope while you are polishing the rusticity of your body, you will not neglect that of your mind, which it is infinitely more requisite you should attend

to . . . . You must learn and study to behave with politeness and propriety—and that is, to render yourself agreeable to all your acquaintance. I know no branch of learning of half so much value. You will be already confounded, I fear, with the multiplicity of your pursuits, else I should like to think you would be able to make some proficiency in French. But you must in the first place, tell me whether you have any desire to encounter it. I beg for the future I may see no more idle flourishing in your letters, you should strive to write a plain, free and easy hand, which these *ornaments* are little friends to. I am

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

XLVI.

To Mr. Rowntree.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 23d May, 1784.

This is the only method I have of sending you the letters and instructions you desire. Mr. Masterman not being in parliament, my franking days are all over, and it would be too late, I fear, to reserve them for Mr. Prissick. The postage

therefore must go to increase Thirkills costs—or mine.

I wish your information as to *my place* had been true. It is far too poor a subject for congratulation. Your reflections are still worse founded, and could only arise from your considering me in the light of a pettyfogging attorney. Damn the king and all his adherents. Fox and Liberty for ever!

I am glad to hear that Mawlams affair with this *trio* of scoundrels, has terminated to your mutual satisfaction. But I assure you, I am no otherwise acquainted with its being settled than by your letter: I was told indeed that Mr. Bevan had made a very free and in my humble opinion very improper use of my name, in some part of the transaction, which I shall take an opportunity one of these days to thank him for. I am well enough acquainted with the secret knavery of all the junto, but I confess I do not entertain Mawlams apprehensions. However, I must in all events beg you to remember that I was neither party, nor privy, to the conclusion of the business.

You will be so good as to give Bevan such directions in Ritson v. Thirkill, as you judge necessary or prudent. I should like Jack Lee on my side very well, but the extravagance of his

fees deters me from applying to him. I long since desired Bevan to retain John Scott, which I naturally conclude he has *not* done. I had been a total stranger to Thirkills having pleaded, if you had not told me of it. But no matter; I only intreat you to pay the same attention to the conduct of the cause as if your client was in Jamaica, and we may do very well.

M's affair is indeed the most curious and surprising of all that have happened in your prolific neighbourhood in my time. The discovery I am told, sits remarkably heavy upon him, which I do not in the least wonder at. "He who does what he should not, must hear what he would not." The fair ones confession with the annotations of the injured spouse, will be a treat which I hope one day to enjoy. Apropòs, has M. condescended to deposit the stuff? As I understand that none of his friends have hitherto dared to mention the subject to him, I certainly shall not be the first to do so, especially as I confess it is a case I know not how to handle, since the actor can bear raillery no worse than the action will applause.

To laugh were want of godliness and grace,
And to be grave, exceeds all power of face.

Yours sincerely,

J. Ritson.

XLVII.

To Mrs. Frank.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 17th June, 1784.

If I do not write to you so regularly as I ought or you wish me to do, I hope you will attribute it to any thing but forgetfulness or intentional neglect, neither of which I assure you can ever influence my behaviour to you. I have done nothing to deserve the gratitude you express, and am far from desirous to be the rival of heaven in your studies to please. If you succeed no better in that quarter than you do with me, you will be very poorly recompensed for your assiduity. I think Joe had better go to school another year, and we shall then determine what to make of him. He will be only fifteen, and you know I was much more before I went to business. Covers are very convenient things, but do not believe that either yourself or any body else will hear from me seldomer because the gentleman, as you say, has lost his seat: I wrote much more frequently, I imagine, before ever he had one. I shall be glad of a letter from you as often as you have the least inclination to write. You must not stand upon punctilios. Your affectionate brother,

J. Ritson

XLVIII.

To the Editor.

Grays Inn, 17th June, 1784.

My dear little fellow,

I have no doubt that you will always retain a proper sense of the favours you receive, as ingratitude is one of the worst of vices, but I do not see any great occasion for the fine compliments with which your letters are generally half filled. When I can do any thing for you which merits such a return, you shall thank me once for all. I am sorry to find that you have so quickly lost the benefit of Mr. Rowntrees instructions during your little clerkship; if we would have you taught to write, we must beg him I think to take you under his care for another fortnight, or indeed till you can remember his lessons out of school. I should be very glad to see you here, especially as I am afraid I shall not have that pleasure at Stockton the next vacation, and am much obliged to our friend Matthew for his kind attention to you, but I must beg leave to say, and I hope you will take it in good part, that it will be much better for you to mind your book, than to come to London,

You will see it soon enough in all likelyhood, though you will have little reason to lament if you never see it at all.

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

XLIX.

TO MRS. FRANK.

DEAR SISTER, Grays Inn, 3d August, 1784.

I don't know who or what they are you call my enemies, that say I have dropt Thirkills affair, but this I can assure you, let them be who or what they will, they are a parcel of confounded liars. It was not in my power to compel the fellow to try the cause, he gave it up before hand, and will of course have to pay all the expences (fifteen or twenty pounds), just in the same manner as he would have done if I had cast him at Durham. This I hope will satisfy you—as to the people, I don't care a single farthing what they say, indeed I am too well acquainted with their natural propensity to lying and scandal, to expect either thanks or good words for my endeavours to serve them. I suppose Thirkill continues to

charge the halfpenny. But as soon as we can get the costs settled, which cannot be till November, I shall most certainly commence a fresh action against him, and will be much surprised if that does not do his business....

Your affectionate brother,

J. RITSON.

L.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 20th October, 1784.

MY DEAR FELLOW,

You must forgive me if I have not paid that attention to your epistolary favours, which, independent of their merit, you had every right to expect—I throw myself entirely on your mercy, as I confess I have little or nothing to alledge in my defence. But you shall not find that my neglect of your letters is any proof of my want of affection for yourself.....

I am glad to find that you apply yourself so much to reading, you cannot possibly do better, that is, if you reap any benefit from it—for otherwise it is of very little consequence what you do.

I hope you will make the best of your time this next winter and summer, both at school and at home, as it is more than probable you will have no more such opportunities of improving yourself.

I thank you for the little book* you sent me, and will take care to recompense you with something as good one of these days. You see there have been people in the world as whimsical as ourselves. ...

I am sorry to hear any thing to your discredit, and hope the story I allude to (which I suppose you can guess at) is not true—if it be, let me advise you to take care how you give rise to another of the same kind, as it is not relationship but good behaviour that will secure you the friendship of

Your affectionate uncle,

J. Ritson.

LI.

To Mrs. Frank.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 30th Nov. 1784.

I have often desired you to conclude nothing from the want of a letter, which is only deferred

* "The way to health and long life," 12mo. 1726. Ed.

from day to day by a habit of indolence that I am never likely to get the better of. I write to you oftener than to any body else, and if that won't content you, I don't know what will.

I should not think Joes reason for disapproving of Mr. Rowntrees office, worthy of much attention, if I were at present disposed to place him in it. He may continue at school till next harvest, by which time I shall most probably have determined what to do with him. I dare say he is a pretty good boy, and with opportunity and encouragement, may do very well. Though I rather think he went a little too far, in putting his friend Mrs. Wisemans cat to death for killing a mouse, which, perhaps nature, certainly education, had taught her to look upon as a duty....

I have desired Mr. Rowntree to pay the money arising by sale of the pew into your hands—for your own use. And have this morning ordered Joe a round hat, which I suppose will be sent by the first ship.

I remain

Your affectionate brother,

J. RITSON.

LII.

To the Same.

Dear Sister, Grays Inn, 6th Jan^y. 1785.

I should not so long have deferred writing to you, if I had understood or suspected any thing of your indisposition, which I am sincerely grieved to hear of, and heartily wish it were in my power to relieve. However, as it is not possible for me at this distance to be of any service to you, I have only to beseech that you will take the utmost care of yourself, and have all necessary advice and attendance .... You must not despair of getting over this bout, even better than you did the last. I purpose being down next harvest and hope to find you with a hearty appetite for a potatoe-pye. If you and Joe be agreeable he shall return to town with me, as I think I can take as much care of, and pay as much attention to him, as any body else he could be placed with—you may be assured that my attachment to him will only cease with my life—and you shall live to be a witness that I have fulfilled my promise.—With my most earnest wishes for your speedy recovery and continued health, I remain, dear sister,

Your very affectionate brother,

J. Ritson.

LIII.

To the Editor.

My good boy, Grays Inn, 6th January, 1785.

I have often regretted that a lying story should have induced me to express myself at all harshly to you. Far from desiring to reprove you for what I learn you actually did, you receive my warmest approbation of your humanity, which shall not go unrewarded, for though it were never in my power to give you any further testimony of such approbation, the consciousness of a mind disposed to contribute to the happiness of the minutest being (which I really flatter myself you do and will ever possess), shall afford you a much greater and more heartfelt satisfaction than to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. I have told your mother, my young Sir, that I design to bring you up to town with me next vacation, that is, if it be perfectly agreeable to you both, and you see you have sufficient time to consider of my proposal. You will live along with me, your employment will not be laborious, nor your leisure irksome. But if you

think you can be happier any where else, let me know, and my best endeavours shall not be wanting to make you so.

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

LIV.

To Mr. Rowntree.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 22d February, 1785.

I am much obliged and indebted to you for your kind and successful effort, for the sale of my ecclesiastical property at Stockton, and only wish that at Hartlepool was half so well disposed of, a wish, however, I totally despair of ever seeing accomplished. I don't think David Halls demand so very exorbitant. It was necessary the man should be recompensed for his trouble, I shall contrive when we meet to satisfy yours some other way. You have paid the ballance to Mat, perhaps, already, if not, you will be pleased to do so when it suits your convenience.

I do not wonder at your becoming the advocate for a knave, it is so much in the line of your pro-

fession. But it would go rather hard with your client I imagine in a court of justice, if you could advance no better argument in his favour than that he was a greater rascal than I suspected. I should not be sorry to hear that he seemed "a good deal hurt" at my treatment of him, if I did not altogether doubt the fact. People who like him make it a ruling principle to sacrifice on all occasions friendship to interest, are seldom prepared for the consequences of their scoundrel behaviour. If he wanted a reconciliation, he knew upon what terms it was to be obtained. I am hurt too, but it is only that such worthless characters should have the art to deceive me for so many years as he has done, and not because I find them out at last. I beg leave to differ from you in the opinion that I "have carried resentment far enough,"—I seldom relinquish it while I remember the offence, and would not have you be surprised if I carry it to my grave. I hope to hear no more from you on so ungrateful a subject, you will have a more agreeable one I understand in a little time.

I expected you would have made it convenient to send up my will and point books by Wear, you are much mistaken if you suppose I have no further occasion for them. Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

LV.

To the Editor.

Dear Nephew, Grays Inn, 24th Feb^{y}. 1785.

That very officious person who told your mother that I had been informed of a great many methodists coming about the house in order to sing, pray, &c. has been guilty of an enormous falsehood. I did hear indeed that her distemper was fostered and increased by a religious melancholy, which I very naturally concluded was supported by some of the above enthusiasts, and therefore desired that none of them should be admitted in future. This commission was to have been intrusted to you, as I did not know at the time that you were one of the gang. It will be necessary to employ somebody in whom I can better confide. The two lines you think so very applicable are downright nonsense. I suspect you made them yourself.

I was sorry to learn your hat would not fit; the hatter tells me the fault is entirely in your *head*, as the hat was big enough for a young giant.—However, he is willing to try a further experiment

upon it, and has therefore sent you a hat designed for one of His Majestys beef-eaters, upon receipt whereof, you will prevail on your friend Matthew, to return the other, by some of his acquaintance in the trade.

Give my love to your mother: I am very glad to hear she recovers, but not that she troubles her head with any lying stories I may happen to be told, which you may assure her are far enough from having the power to make me uneasy.

Your affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I have had a *Spartan Manual* ready for you some time, but have met with no opportunity to send it.

LVI.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR NEPHEW, Grays Inn, 4th June, 1785.

I know I do not write to you so often as you have a right to expect, but you will not much regard my want of attention in this respect when we are better acquainted, and I shall have it in

my power to convince you that there are other methods of preserving affection, than epistolary correspondence, of which I confess myself too indolent to be an assiduous cultivator. In the mean time, though you may imagine that *I* neglect you, yet I hope you do not neglect yourself. You should pay all possible attention to Latin and writing. I do not apprehend Mr. Pattison can put you into Greek this summer, but if he should, I desire that you may not waste your time in acquiring any more knowledge of that language, than consists in reading it with facility from a familiarity with the characters, though you should not understand a word. Latin will be useful to you, not Greek, and I beg you will pay no regard to any one who tells you otherwise.

Mr. Prissick is so obliging as to take for you a set of the *Adventurer*, which is a very well-written, agreeable, and, in many respects, instructive work. I lay the least stress on the last epithet, though it will be natural for you to consider it as the most recommendatory part of the character of the book. But if you will only reflect that all necessary or useful instruction (with respect to morals I mean), is comprised in such simple terms as truth, honour, integrity, justice and politeness, (or the art of rendering ones self agreeable), you

will have little reason to be displeased with any book from its deficiency in that point, as the most an author can do will be only to place your own ideas in different and striking lights....

I am,
dear nephew,
Your affectionate uncle,
J. RITSON.

LVII.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR NEPHEW, Grays Inn, 30th July, 1785.

As I have no hope left of being at Stockton this summer, I would recommend it to you to get yourself in readiness to take your leave of the country, about the middle of September at furthest. You cannot do better, I think, than commit yourself to the care of one of the Stockton captains who are for the most part very honest people, except, indeed, where it is their interest to be otherwise, which is as much as one can say of any body. If you can get nothing better on board of ship than biscuit and water, you may certainly

make a shift to subsist upon that food for a week or two, and though there may be neither bed nor hammock for you, when a person is fatigued he will sleep very comfortably on a cabin floor or a coil of rope. Besides, a little temporary hardship at the outset of your expedition into the world may teach you to bear those greater misfortunes to which all are liable, with more philosophy.... You may bring with you what books you please, but there are plenty here, so that you need not be afraid of being in want of any amusement of that kind. If you can, by looking into the boxes or closet, discover two such books as Lindsays *History of Scotland,* (folio) and Crawfords *Memoirs of Scotland,* (8vo.) I would be glad you would take the charge of them.

As you will have very little time to stay with your mother, I would wish you to make the most profitable use of it, viz. in acquiring the art of frying and dressing potatoes, making puff-paste, pickling, preserving and mending stockings, or any other similar kind of knowledge which you may never have an opportunity of coming at, and can have no idea of the vast utility of. In short, to make a pudding, and set a button on your shirt, will be of more use than all your writing and reading. You will think, perhaps, that such

a lesson would be more fit for one who was coming into a Cooks shop, than a Conveyancers chambers—but when you have been here a year or two you will probably be of a different opinion.* My love to your mother, and believe me,

Your sincerely affectionate uncle,

J. RITSON.

P. S. Bring a bottle or two of catsup with you. A barrel of the best potatoes, and two or three Yarm-fair cheeses.

LVIII.

To MR. ISAAC REED.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 19th Jany. 1786.

Whatever cause it was owing to, I felt myself very much hurt at the slight contempt with which I found or imagined I was treated in the three notes you allude to, of which I can hardly persuade myself that you are the author. You can-

* The Editor, unfortunately, lost the benefit of these singular instructions, by having set off for town previously to the receipt of the letter.

not suppose it my inclination and I am sure it is not my interest that any disagreement should take place between us; as I must always acknowledge that I have never formed an intimacy productive of a hundredth part so much advantage to me. And since you are pleased to say you set some value by my acquaintance, of which perhaps your letter is a proof, as well as to declare that you "had no idea that 'you' could possibly give 'me' any offence," and profess yourself "content to stand or fall by the determination of any impartial person that 'I' shall name," I am willing to believe that I may have been somewhat too hasty: and with respect to any thing further which may be necessary or becoming to be done or said on my part I beg leave to refer it to the consideration of Mr. Baynes, by whom I submit to be directed. He is master of the subject and will take the liberty to call upon you.

I shall only request the favour to add that it would be most absurd nay inexpressibly impertinent and foolish in me to dispute the right you have in common with every other person of controverting my opinions or correcting my errors: a liberty of which no one perhaps has made a greater use than myself. I think I need call no ghost from the grave to explain the difference

between *information* and *attack*. Far from being offended, you say, with any person who should acquaint you that you had a hole in your stocking or some dirt 'on' your face, you would think yourself much obliged to him; and so should I, but not if he accompanied the information with a kick on the shin or a box on the ear. I have nothing to object to your inserting the notes of Mr. Tyrwhitt and Mr. Malone. *They* had received some *provocation*, and if they have advanced any thing I dislike I can find a speedier method of being even with them than that you are so obliging as to point out. And do you seriously think that after being gibbeted for eight or ten years in the margin of your edition it is a sufficient compensation that I stand a chance of obtaining a reversal of my sentence from your successor? No, no, e'en let me hang on.

What I threw out in prejudication of a new edition, [or] rather of all future editions of Johnson and Steevenses Shakespeare was surely written before I knew any thing of your concern in it. Besides, my antipathy to that edition arises from the plan and nature of it, which neither has been nor possibly could be altered: I should like *your* edition very well, but I am never to be reconciled to that of Johnson and Steevens.

I shall dwell no longer on a subject which I would have given one of my fingers had never existed, and which for my own sake I shall endeavour as soon as possible to forget.

I am, dear sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

J. RITSON.

LIX.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Grays Inn, 18th April, 1786.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

You are willing I see to avail yourself of the poorest apology, rather than acknowledge an error which, but for such paternal pertinacity, I might have imagined had originated with some other person. What care I for your "*neighbour Clarke*" or his "old pilot"! Suppose they choose to write the *manor of Portrack* or of *Saltholme*, will that be sufficient to convert either of these places into a manor? There is *no manor of Norton* but the vicarage manor, and you *know* there is not. And when you talk of the manor being

" where the lands lay, not where the parties live," you degenerate into nonsense. And that's what I call fair argument. . . .

You have two or three letters belonging to me, which were intended to have been made use of against that knavish postmaster: be so good as send them up with Wear or Prissick. If I recollect right they are such as ought to be in no other hands than my own: though I had no difficulty in confiding them to *you*; as I do not know a single person of whose fidelity I have a higher opinion, of which I think I gave you a sufficient proof in the communication of those two books of the *wills* of so many *living* persons, a step which nothing but the exceeding confidence I have in your *secrecy* and *prudence*, could have induced me to take, or taken, would prevent my wishing to retract. In short, you know I have always said that it was entirely in your own power to make yourself as much esteemed and respected, as you are confessedly able and assiduous. . . .

I am, dear Jack,

Your sincere well-wisher, and

very obedient humble servant,

J. RITSON.

LX.

To Mr. Harrison.

Dear Sir, Stockton, 3d October, 1786.

I intended, but forgot, to desire you would be so good the next time you went into the Dean and Chapters Library to take notice of the Episcopal Registers there, and let me know if there be any prior to the time of Richard de Bury, and whose they are.

I inclose you two copies of my *Descent of the Crown*, the second edition corrected. If you have any acquaintance with the nonjuring minister at Newcastle, you may present one of them to him, and you shall have another if you want it.

Will you have the goodness to look over my *Bishopric Garland*, and suggest any alterations or remarks which may occur to you for the improvement of a second edition. The *Northumberland* and *Yorkshire Garlands* are in great forwardness. Cannot you assist me with an additional song or two. The bishopric arms on the title page, you will observe differ from those at the conclusion. The first I got cut myself, and sup-

pose I thought them correct at the time, you know best whether they are or not.

I am, dear sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

LXI.

To MR. WADESON.

DEAR MAT, Grays Inn, 3d December, 1786.

In consequence of what you told me passed between Christopher and you, upon the subject of the books, I have looked over his letters and send you such extracts from them, as I trust will convince both you and him that the copies he took, were entirely on his own account.

In a letter, dated May 9th 1779, he says, "I will take twelve copies of your song book, and, if you send none yourself to Matt, or any other person here, I will take *twenty-five*." I believe he has no reason to say that I did not comply with the condition.

Again, June 11th 1780. "When your book is ready, I will take a few copies of *your part* of 'em."

Again, Nov. 14, 1783. "*I wish you'll send those songs as soon as possible.*" This was soon after I had left Stockton, where we had had some conversation about those same songs, in the course of which, on my giving him Mr. R. Hoars list of subscribers, he enlarged the number of copies he had agreed to take to *thirty-five*, which were afterwards sent, as appears by a letter, dated October 3d, 1784, where he says, "I received the collection of songs from Mr. Johnson just before our races—have sent them to most of the subscribers in the list you gave me." Please to ask him how many names there were in that list.

Though Christopher might have his reasons for procuring, as he did, a dissolution of the intimacy between us, and which I am very ready to allow was of little pecuniary advantage to him, I am rather surprised he should assert that the copies I sent were to be upon *my* account, as he either must or should have known that the contrary was the fact, as is apparent both from his own letters and the nature of the transaction itself; and I am confident that if no disagreement had taken place between us, that assertion would never have been made, nor the idea entertained. Perhaps neither you nor I should mistake the true motive of Mr. Christopher's conduct, upon this occasion were

we to take the trouble of guessing at it. But it is no matter, I only hope he will settle the balance with you according to his own promise, without rendering it necessary for me to say any thing further upon the subject.

I am, dear Mat,
Your sincerely faithful friend and servant,
J. RITSON.

LXII.

To Mr. Rowntree.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 4th Dec. 1786.

You would certainly have had a letter from me much sooner, if I could have got your deeds executed by Mr. Reed, which I was not able to effect before Saturday. Shake has undertaken to deliver them to one of the Captain Metcalfes, who sets off to-morrow. Inclosed in the parcel you will receive the draught of a power of attorney, with the form of a certificate, in the affair of Matthew Colling, which upon their being returned properly

signed, &c. will enable me to obtain the money due to him from the Hudsons Bay Company, amounting as I am informed to 27*l.* As it is probable that the minister and churchwardens of any one parish cannot speak to all the circumstances mentioned in the certificate, you must split and alter it as you have occasion. Though I should think you might be able to find parsons enow that would put their names to any thing you chose to set down for them. With respect to charity jobs, I am no more fond of them than yourself, and beg that this may be the last I receive from you, as I plainly perceive, if you can get an agent to do your business for nothing, it will in a very little time consist of nothing else but charity jobs. I should be glad to hear of the increase of business in your office if I thought you came honestly by it, but as I am apt to believe it is entirely forced by chopping and changing of poor peoples securities, I cannot in conscience congratulate you upon it.

I shall make you the usual charge for the deed and surrender, as I take your client to be like yourself—a very honest man—who would not wish that any person should give up his time and trouble for nothing. That is not your plan, Master? No, no. You'll take care to do very

well for yourself, I dare say, whatever you do for your clients. So no more at present from

Your humble servant till death,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I have omitted to tell you that after a laborious search in heraldic books, I am convinced that your family stole into the world, nobody knows how or when. Though I can easily believe that when you yourself go out of it, your exit will be sufficiently notorious. Apropos! there is one coat of arms which I should think you might adopt without offence to any, as it seems particularly appropriated to *gentlemen* of your honorable profession, representing at once the rewards you merit, and the means by which you attain them. Here it is.*

* Under this piece of pleasantry is neatly sketched a regular coat of arms, consisting of a man placed on the pillory, with two pens crossed over an ink-stand below, and a gibbet, in expectancy, above him: the motto "Palma non sine pulvere." Ed.

LXIII.

To the Same.

Dear Rowntree, Grays Inn, 27th Dec. 1786.

The principal object of the certificate (which however you may wonder, seems to me a very reasonable requisition) is the right of representation to the man, whose death, if the company be already assured of it, need only be introduced *pro forma*. Surely *some* clergyman and *some* parish officers are acquainted with the family of the deceased, or can, at least speak to their information and belief. Does Capt. Fowler know any thing of the parties, or Capt. Christopher? A line from either to the effect I mentioned would doubtless be sufficient. In short, come as near the point as you can. If nothing else will serve, make an affidavit of the facts *yourself*. They know nothing of you at the Hudsons Bay Office.

Apropos, I beg your pardon for having omitted in your escutcheon the principal bearing, which I recollected the moment I had sent my letter off and am surprized I should have forgot. Please to insert a *Testament* in the upper part of the

shield, and all will be right. I am sorry your excessive modesty will not permit you to assume what you are so likely to be intitled to. There are I doubt not some in Grays Inn who may deserve such honours as well as yourself. But they are extensive enough for all the profession; hemp and timber being sufficiently plentiful.

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

LXIV.

To RALPH HOAR, ESQ.*

DEAR RALPH, New Years Day, 1787.

While Indias burning soil
Repays with wealth thy martial toil,
Thee let my humble muse remind
Of friends and favourites left behind,
Lest envious time their memories blot;
And even thy C——— be forgot.
Though, haply, G——, M——, or D——,
Or loving Fanny, from my pen
Might please as well. Nor must we fail
In reverence due to Mrs. G——,

* Then Lieutenant in the 52d Regt. at Madras. Ed.

Whose striped carriage driving round
E'en now may make the Inn resound;
(The times how chang'd!) she too could prove
An instance of thy wandering love.
You guess her by her borrow'd name,
What, don't you? "Mrs. R—?" the same.
Of all the rest—whether they breathe
Above the earth, or underneath
They breathe no more—whether the air
Of pure St. George's Fields they share,
Or plac'd aloft in gilded coach
Defy th'undreaded duns approach—
I nothing learn.....
The Ladies having honour due,
Lo, next myself I bring in view:
We poetasters never fail
To form the hero of the tale.
And Vanity supports the Muse,
While thus her journey she pursues.
Since I a letter did receive
Is now some eight months I believe;
So that I'm almost fit to fear
You're dead and gone, and "sleepeth here."
If that's the case pray let me know,
With your address i' th' shades below;
And how Letters may convey,
Till I [illegible] you direct my way.

We then shall talk old matters o'er,
Seated on Phlegethons red shore;
While thirst, with healths to every wench,
Full flowing cups of sulphur quench,
"Welcome," as ancient Pistol says,
Welcome, once more, "these pleasant days!"—
But till we to that coast are hurl'd,
Let's talk like people of this world.
For news, I know not what to say,
You get it still a nearer way.
Things go on pretty much the same,
Nor is the nation in a flame,
'Tis true—but you'll have heard the thing
We'd nearly lost our gracious king:
Peg Nicholsons tremendous knife
Had almost reft his precious life.
We all are sorry—that it fail'd—
'Twas sure some wond'rous cause prevail'd!
Some say 'twas god, whose powerful arm
Preserv'd his chosen one from harm;
Though some to say so far do go
The woman never aim'd the blow.
Of this enough. Administration
Has just undone this destin'd nation;
Which, if Charles Fox don't take the helm,
Immediate ruin must o'erwhelm.
But what is that, you'll say, to you,
You're of a different parish now.

Or what to me—poor scribbling elf!
Let me attend my proper self,
I trow, my friend, that's care enough,
Though little cause I have to puff
My stock or store, which is as low,
I think, as when you hence did go.
—Complaining never made increase,
So let my havings rest in peace.
My old friend Masterman is gone,
And now the chambers are my own:
Not gratis—that you must not think,
For, though I did not down the chink,
A bargain still a bargain is,
And I did for them pay, I wis.
His eldest daughter married was
Some six weeks ere he hence did pass.
He left me nothing but a ring,
Nor did I look for any thing,
Knowing his mind not that way tended:
Though some are mightily offended;
And I, who ow'd a hundred pound,
Could wish he had releas'd the bond.
Old Bradley still can walk about,
And looks, indeed, quite fat and stout.
But I've a notion, you must know,
He'll yield a pudding to the crow
One of these days, for all his fat;
For I have little faith in that.

Thy old acquaintance, Ralph, Miss Sleigh,
Who still has great regard for thee,
Commission'd one to ask me how
Thou liv'dst, and where thou might'st be now.
I gave thee a good character,
The truth was neither here nor there.
'Twill seem, I fancy, from this prate,
That I've to Stockton been of late.
'Tis true, I have; nor there alone,
I've through the North of Scotland gone,
For Inverness I did embark,
And sail'd from London in the dark;
Some eight days after landed sound,
And travelled over Scotish ground,
Full many a weary mile, I trow,
For chiefly I on foot did go;
Tir'd, hungry—nay without a shirt
To change what was as black as dirt;
Though once to make me spruce next day,
'Twas wash'd while I in cuerpo lay.
I came by th' West of England home,
And as through Westmoreland I roam,
I call to see some of my kin,
Who me full welcome made, I ween.
I mention this to tell you plain,
That I in th' self-same house have lain
In which my grandfather was born,
And haply his—pray think not scorn;

For though your worships family,
By the mothers side, may ancient be,
We little folks are very glad
To learn that we've a grand-sire had.
At Durham tób I spent a day,
And did at your friend Punshons stay.
Hilton my hair did dress, who beats
The world, you know, in shaving feats.
At supper Meredith among
Us came, and sung an exc'lent song.
Next morning Mr. Harrison,
Clarke, Wear, and I, took a walk down
To view old Finchales ivy'd walls;
Where, scrambling, we got many falls.
But pleas'd we were, the day was fine;
And with George Pearson we did dine.
At Stockton nothing was astir,
Which won't surprise you much to hear.
Len Robinson has lost his wife,
But whether that a single life
Would please him long, folks could not say—
Soon after this I came away.
Your brother George I have not seen
Though he has long in England been.
I one day, being in the Tower,
Call'd at the jewel-office door;
Says I, is Mr. Hoar in, pray?
"No, Sir." And so I came away.

My dearest Ralph, this childish rime
Takes up a great deal of your time,
Which might be better far employ'd,
And troth I fear your stomach's cloy'd.
This many a year I have not made
Two lines of verse, though once my trade
You know it was—No, you can't tell,
But I can yet remember well.
When care was to my youth unknown,
My fancy free, my hours my own,
I lov'd i' th' laureat grove to stray,
The path was pleasant, prospect gay;
But now my genius sinks, nor knows
To make a couplet tink i' th' close.
No more of that—nor much of this—
I hasten fast to my *Fi-nis*,—
The poets end—the end of all—
But ere that fate me hence does call,
Shall we not meet, shall we not quaff,
And once more have an honest laugh?
Shall I not hear your wond'rous tales
Of heav'n-high hills, and hell-like vales,
Rough quarries, rocks, wide-spreading trees,
Whole armies that enshade with ease;
Of antres vast, and deserts wild,
Young Arabs keen, old Bramins mild;
Of accidents by flood and field;
Of Nabobs you have made to yield;

Of Moplas fierce your hand has tam'd,
And monsters that your sword has maim'd;
Of hair-breadth scapes i' th' deadly breach
Of ship-wreck on the barb'rous beach;
How you were sold, and how got free,
And portance in your history;
Of battle, siege, disast'rous chances,
And all dame Fortunes mazy dances;
Of murder, famine, death, despair,
And all the horrours of the war?
Your hint to speak, your process, such.
O you can never talk too much.
We'll all believe. The cannibal,
The Anthropophaginian tale;
The men whose heads you've seen to grow
Beneath their shoulders—fire in snow.
You'll us beguile of many a tear,
When some distressful stroke we hear
That your youth suffer'd; and when done
A world of sighs shall be your own.
We'll swear, in faith 'tis passing strange,
And long about the world to range.
You'll gain our love for dangers pass'd,
We yours for pitying them, as fast.
O yes, I shall!—My worthy friend
Believe me I do not pretend
What is not real when I say,
I long to see that happy day,

Long to reshake you by the hand,
And bid you welcome to the land;
To see you seated in Grays Inn
At breakfast, as the time has been.
In short to say with pious heart
Lord lettest thou thy slave depart;
His eyes have seen all his desire,
He now is ready to retire.
May honour, fortune, still attend
Your every step.

Your constant friend,

J. RITSON.

LXV.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Stockton, 3d Oct. 1787.

I send you the print of Lady S. which I think you will find pretty well done, and likely enough to be one day regarded as a great curiosity.

The Election of a Mayor came on last night at which our friend Wear cut a most conspicuous figure, having the courage to oppose the re-election of his late worship and of course the whole corporation, by his single solitary vote, several

who had solemnly engaged to support his cause, turning tail, like true Stocktonians, and either refusing to poll or going over to the enemy. Great souls, however, are incapable of depression, and our hero concluded his opposition by demanding a scrutiny against a majority of twenty to one. In truth it was a high scene, and such a one as I may safely venture to say was never before exhibited on that stage.

Pray do not forget or neglect to look into and acquaint me with the contents of the old Episcopal Registers—to give my compliments to good Mrs. Harrison, and to believe me ever,

Most sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

LXVI.

To MR. ROWNTREE.

DEAR JACK, Grays Inn, 28th Oct. 1787.

I had a letter ready to send you by yesterdays post, when I received the pleasure of yours of the 24th by favour of Mr. Calvert, and as I did not see him, and am uncertain how soon he may call again, I write now to be prepared for him;

concluding from what you say that he would not be able to leave London without his credentials.

I got to the George and Blue Boar between eleven and twelve on Tuesday night after an unpleasant journey with disagreeable company. The accounts you see have been easily settled and the ballance soon spent, so that I have nothing to do but to sit soberly down to business.

Mr. Borwick it seems is still in Yorkshire, but must be in town I should presume in the course of a few days. The place where Mr. Reeve lives is at such a confounded distance, that it was not possible for me to deliver your letter to him before this morning—and indeed it has rained more or less every day since my arrival.

Give my best compliments to my Lord and the Counsellor. I am highly obliged to you all for the favour of your company on Sunday. You may tell his lordship he is to be a very near neighbour of mine, the chambers Bayley has taken for him being at No. 8, and not at No. 14. Meddowcroft has entirely quitted them, and removed the whole of his furniture. They are in every respect the reverse of his former chambers, of course I suppose he will like them the better. Certain it is that he cannot possibly object to their *heighth*, as he will not have a single step to mount,

and people may stand and p— into his windows.

Whilst I acknowledge that the pains you took to bring about a reconciliation between Christopher and me, does much credit to your disposition, I must at the same time be permitted to observe that I am by no means satisfied with, but on the contrary, am rather uneasy at the manner in which it was apparently effected. Nor can I on reflection admit what passed to go for more than a dream, unless Christopher does what, if he were at all desirous of a good understanding between us, he most certainly should have done, and what I in his situation most certainly would have done, expresses his sorrow or makes some other equivalent apology for having been the occasion of the difference. All this I readily agree would be much better forgot, but then it ought to be got rid of in a decent and regular way, which has by no means been the case. I can easily conceive that you see no reason for so much punctiliousness, but people act from their own conviction and their own feelings, and for my part I shall very readily confess that I had much rather both be and have a declared enemy, than an insincere friend. Christopher, if you think it worth your while to mention it to him, may turn the matter in his mind against my next coming down.

I have neither opportunity nor judgement to make up such a parcel as you desire, I could easily pack up a stone or two indeed, but I should be afraid that the fellow smoking the trick, might be more inclined to return the parcel at my head than to deliver it to your hand. If there be any particular musical pieces you could wish to have, I will send you them with the greatest pleasure. But what do I know of *trios*.—I recollect indeed your desiring the song of "O Bonny Lass" which I have accordingly inclosed, and to satisfy you the better I have added all the printed music I have by me—which I do not think worth keeping.

I shall be most glad of my Lords arrival if it were only for the *raps* [news] you promise me. In the mean time, with my best compliments to Mrs. Rowntree, and my sincerest wishes for your mutual health and happiness, I remain,

Dear Jack,
Most faithfully and truly yours
J. Ritson.

P. S. Well, a week is gone and this scoundrel upholsterer has not called, I can't account for his stay in town so long, if indeed he be still here, unless he be living gratis. My letter grows so

antiquated that if I do not send it immediately, it will be quite obsolete. You shall have the parcel by the upholsterer or some other hand. I fear that my Lord will be set off. Saturday 3d. Nov.

LXVII.

To the Same.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, 1st. Jan. 1788.

And so the old gentleman "is, indeed, deceased; or as you would say, in plain terms gone to heaven!" Well, there can be no occasion to wish you either a merry Christmas or a happy new year, as I fancy this long-wished-for event will have put you in possession of all the mirth and happiness you could possibly desire. As I naturally concluded that in the gratification of your immediate extasy, you would scrape over all your old pieces till you were weary, I thought a little novelty would be most apropos, and therefore lost no time in ordering a couple of sets of trios, which you will receive by the first ship. I am afraid, however, I have made a mistake in my

order which it is now too late to correct. Not having your letter in my pocket at the time I suffered the fellow to put up one set for a violin, *tenor* and bass. I do not exactly know the ill consequence of this blunder, but at the worst you can return me the book in order to have it exchanged. He assures me the music is altogether favourite.

I have this morning had a line from Prissick, who gives me the particulars of the old bucks will, with which I presume you are by this time better acquainted than I can make you. You will probably have it in your power to favour me with a copy of the will and codicil, for which I shall be much obliged to you. Prissick is silent as to the precedents, nor does he tell me how the books purchased "for the promoting of true religion and virtue," (in which, and especially the latter, it must be confessed, he superabounded) are to be disposed of....

I heartily and sincerely thank you for the additional instance of your valuable friendship in procuring me the bill for 20*l.* and in fact saving me the money. It is rather a long date, but I take it for granted it will be paid; if not I intend to come upon you, as I see you have indorsed it, and

I should like of all things to have it in my power to swinge an attorney.

Most faithfully yours,
J. RITSON.

LXVIII.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 11th Jan. 1788.

I take the opportunity by a friend of mine coming down to Stockton, of sending you a small packet of seeds of the Mangel Wurzel, which I had from Dr. Lettsom, with full instructions how to sow it, and rear it, and dress it and eat it. As it is a GERMAN ROOT I have no doubt of its proving a particular favourite. But whether I shall have the pleasure of partaking of your repast in the course of the summer, is at present uncertain. To tell you the truth, I am considering of a trip to Paris or Madrid; being ashamed to have lived so long in the world and seen so little of it.

Give me leave to ask you if the Inscription I propose for the case which is to contain poor Baynes's books may not run thus:

Hos libros,
facinora fabulosa heroica
præcipue enarrantes,
Legavit
Vir Cl.
Apprimè eruditus et amicissimus,
J. B.
Amico suo moestissimo,
Beneficiique maximè memori,
J. R.
Obiit IV. die Aug. Anno MDCCLXXXVII.

Pray correct it, for it can't be put up without your approbation. The date I think might be rendered more classical.*

* The following inscription was finally adopted :

Fabvlas Romanenses mvltas et cvriosas
Hvivs Bibliothecae svpellectilem
Josepho Ritsoñ
Beneficii nvnqvam oblitvro
Legavit
Ingensqve svi desiderivm
Reliqvit
Vir ervditvs probvs liberalis
Joannes Baynes
Avgvsti qvarta die anno MDCCLXXXVII
Bonis omnibvs flebilis
Obiit

ED.

Now for a little etymology. I remember your laughing at me for making *windlass* a machine to *wind* a *rope* or *lace*; but I may be right enough for all that: and on looking into Johnsons Dictionary I find he has adopted the same idea. It is however possible that you may think Johnsons authority no better than mine: we must therefore recur to principle. What say you to *lash* which sailors use precisely in the sense of *to rope*, or *tye with a rope*? There's something in this I believe, and though I have not the vanity to suppose I shall be able to bring you over to my opinion, it will be very evident I think to any impartial person (and I beg leave to mention Mrs. Harrison) that I am in the right.

Whence should we have the proper name *Herne* or *Hearne*, Samuel *Herne*, Thomas *Hearne*, *Herne* in Essex, *Hernhill*, Kent, and *Hernefield* frequent in common or township land? From the bird, perhaps, you may say; or Benson may tell you from henn, *angulus*; or most likely on consulting your favourite German Glossarist, De Heer Kinker van konk Sprackengotchdern, you will be supplied with some meaning for the word to which Englishmen and Saxons have been equally strangers, and for which, I am sure, if it contradict any thing that I say I shall not care one farthing.

My discovery is this: *Hern* and *Fern* are synonymous; and mind we have Mr. *Fearne* for Mr. *Hearne*, and *Fernhill*, Salop, for *Hernhill*, Kent; the *h* and *f* being convertible as they are in Spanish; e. g. hijo, fijo, hidalgo, fidalgo, hizo, fizo, hechos, fechos, Hernando, Fernando, &c. &c. What do you think of this?

I am much obliged by your good intention in sending me Gardiners book, but I positively will not rob you of it. I find there is a copy of it in the Museum, whence I shall transcribe the title, &c.

Saint, I fancy, could not be prevailed upon to trust his ballads out of his own house; and you have not been able I fear to get a sight of the Episcopal Registers in Bowlbys office: so that things will remain pretty much in statu quo, I imagine, till August or September, 1789.

I expected to have had it in my power to send you one or two of my publications with a Don Quixote; but must defer this to another opportunity.

With the compliments of the season to yourself and Mrs. Harrison, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your most faithful humble servant,

J. RITSON.

P. S. The friend I alluded to (a Stockton man) has changed his mind. So that I send the parcel as I can.

LXIX.

To Mr. Rowntree.

By Return of Post.

Dear Jack, Grays Inn, 11th Feb. 1788.

If the impertinent scoundrel who reported the sessions cases had been as keen a hand as yourself, I am afraid that my friend Barnard and I would have cut a much more ridiculous figure in the world than we do at present. Certainly I did not wish that so very foolish a business should be known amongst you, till I had an opportunity at least of explaining the circumstances in person. However I am by no means surprised at the anticipation, as there is always some damn'd good-natured friend or other eager to do one such a piece of service. You know, perhaps, that my Lord was one of the "two other gentlemen" who were under such a dressing necessity to be shaved. But I am sorry to say that his conduct on the day of

trial, at which *we* who came forward as *culprits*, only expected *him* to attend as a *witness* (in case his testimony should have been thought necessary) was not altogether so noble as it should have been. This produced (besides a call for his *quota*) a little sparring between us in the hall. He spoke however next day, though I do not flatter myself that we are upon the most cordial terms.

I do not think I can pay you a higher compliment (and I certainly wish to pay you the highest in my power) on account of your inimitable description of Mrs. B's ball, than by assuring you that neither Maister Mowlams minuet, nor even Richards high dance could have been executed in a more capital stile. I have the parties in my eye as lively as if I had actually been a spectator. I see the counsellor leading down the dance, and retiring with his partner behind the window curtain—for the sake of a little air—I see the fumes of the hot punch prove too powerful for the delicacy of the good hostess's constitution—not used, alas! to *smelling!*—And soss, I see Richard come upon the unfortunate fiddler. In short the puppets of Master Peters shew did not appear more natural to Don Quixote than the characters of your little narrative do to me. I shall preserve your

letters with care as the most excellent materials for the Scandalous Chronicle of Stockton,—of which place your friend Christopher is no longer to consider himself Historiographer, he is not worthy to hold your inkstand....

Sincerely yours

J. Ritson.

LXX.

To Mr. Harrison.

Dear Sir, Stockton, 11th Oct. 1788.

Notwithstanding the plainness and perspicuity of your directions, and the information I afterward received, I contrived to lose my way two or three times between Trimdon and the place I left you at, and am persuaded I did not consume less than a couple of hours in my attempts to regain it. However as one blunder threw me upon Thornley Hall, and another upon Kellow Church, I had not any great reason to complain. After all the road is a vile and infamous road, and I am convinced several miles about.

I was down at Hartlepool the other day, and

wished very much to have had the pleasure of your company, as there are many pieces of antiquity which you I dare say would have been at no loss to elucidate, though I and my company could make nothing at all of them. I have a fine etymology of Greatham and Grantham, but the displaying of my learning and ingenuity in their full perfection would take up more time than I can at present spare: so that you will have one pleasure at least to come.

I think you told me that the Rolls of bishops Pudsey and Bek are extant in the Cursitors office to which you have access: now as I know you have sometimes a leisure hour, that you love to pore over musty parchments and still more to oblige your friends, I shall esteem it as a very great favour if you will take an opportunity of exploring these same Rolls for Stockton Charter of Incorporation. I am well convinced it must be there, and nothing could gratify me more than a sight of it....

I set off to-morrow morning for York, from which place I shall take my departure on the Sunday following for London.

I beg my compliments to Mrs. Harrison. That the best health and spirits, and every other com-

fort of life may attend you both for many many years is the sincere wish of,

Dear Sir,

Your much obliged and ever faithful friend and servant,

J. RITSON.

LXXI.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 12th March, 1789.

I am much obliged to you for the little packet you sent me by Mr. Maxwell, and should have been still more so had it contained a line or two signed R. H. I presume the figures in the list of counties are to give the number of acres—but I am afraid I must be indebted to you for some little explanation of it, the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you.

You receive a pretty good copy of Cobarruvias and not a bad one of the Menagiana. I bid 15s. at an auction lately for Terentianus Maurus, but lost it: and find it is so scarce a book that one cannot expect ever to get it at that price. There

are three editions of it in the Pinelli catalogue, a fine and valuable collection of (chiefly) classical books from Venice, which will begin to be sold the 20th of next month. It is supposed they will go high, but if you wish me to purchase one of the copies of Terentianus, you will be pleased to say so.

You may recollect my noticing a passage in Goldsmiths *Natural History*, where he expressed a doubt whether insects might not be produced by putrefaction, or rather I believe admitted the fact and cited Bonnets *Observations sur Corps organisés* for his authority. I was of course desirous to procure the book, and had lately the good fortune to meet with it, but so far is it from confirming or any way countenancing such an opinion, that it has quite demolished my favourite Epicurean system: and as it appears to be a curious and inquisitive work, I have inclosed it in the parcel that you may take a peep into it at your leisure. I fancy the Abbate Spalanzani, whom I mean to read one of these days, will lead me a little further into the secret. But I cannot satisfy myself as to the generation of those monstrous worms which are frequently voided by children, and as I take it frequently kill them . . . .

'With my best compliments to good Mrs. Harrison, I remain, Dear Sir,

Sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

LXXII.

To JOSEPH COOPER WALKER, ESQ.

SIR, Grays Inn, 12th Aug. 1789.

'I have too long and I fear too rudely deferred my acknowledgments for the honour you intended me when in Dublin, as well as for the flattering manner in which you have been pleased to introduce my name in your very interesting and agreeable *Memoirs of the Bards.* Mr. Wilson would inform you of the embarrassing circumstances which prevented my accepting your obliging invitation. I had bespoke my passage, and the vessel was about to sail before I received it. I hope, however, you will do me the justice to believe I have frequently regretted the loss of so desirable an interview. In fact, without the most distant idea of being known to a single person (except a young man who had come from the same place with myself,) I merely took Dublin in my way to

the North of England, by no means intending a regular or formal visit to that capital. But I beg leave to assure you that if I could have made it convenient to have retraced the same route this present vacation, the pleasure and information I should have promised myself from your conversation, would have been the principal inducement.

I took the earliest opportunity on my return to town, of reading your instructive and entertaining history. You have my thanks in common with those of the public for affording so delectable an employment. It is much to be wished that in addition to the poetry, music, dress and arms of the ancient Irish you would favour us with an account of their diet, manners and amusements; topics equally interesting with those you have already so happily treated. After the elegant specimen M. Le Grand has given us of the method in which such a subject should be treated, in his *Vie privée des Français*, it becomes matter not of lamentation only, but of surprise that no person has attempted a work of this nature for England. But we are altogether for hasty and superficial productions which cost as little labour to compile as ingenuity to put together. How much therefore must Ireland be indebted to you for rescuing her from such an imputation, by works which

evince so superior a degree of both industry and genius!

I should be glad to be informed when the grammar of O'Mulloy was published, and where the "Examination of the arguments contained in a late Introduction to the History of the ancient Irish and Scots" is to be met with. I have great reason to doubt the truth of the anecdote you give (Appendix, p. 85, of your Memoirs) of Cunningham the poet (without an *e*). I knew him personally toward the latter part of his life, when those moderate sacrifices you speak of, had totally disqualified him from writing pastorals. His first and best pieces were produced before he had acquired that pernicious habit which impaired his faculties and shortened his days. *Whiskey* may inspire, but I will never believe that *gin* does.

I cannot perceive the similarity between the English word *Drumble* (Mem. p. 89, which is now provincial and only means to be stupid or confused) and the Irish cronān. Not having Mr. Malones *Supplement* at hand, I cannot tell how he may make it out, but I should think it impossible.

The adage given at p. 108, should run thus, for so Master Silence hath it:

'Tis merry in hall,
When beards wag all.

Adam Davie, as Mr. Warton will inform you, paraphrased it as follows in Edward the thirds time:

Merry swithe it is in halle
When the berdis wavith alle.

Rocnesvalles, p. 110, should have been noticed in the errata. A *romance* in Spanish is literally a *vulgar ballad.*

Could not the "lyric compositions (p. 128,) that would do honour to the most polished nations of ancient or modern times," be collected and published in a volume? "Why" as sir Toby Belch says, "are these things hid?"

Am I to take the Irish poems published by Charles Wilson in 1782, to be a pamphlet of 92 pages, of which I have a copy without the title, which as the bookseller told me was never printed?

There are some curious lines upon the old Irish melodies, in the poems of Laurence Whyte, Dublin, 1742, p. 154, which might have been pertinently enough quoted in your observations on the subject. I presume you know the book.

Though we say a *moot-case* or *point*, I much question whether the expression "so *moot* a point" (Dress. p. 3.) can be used with strict propriety. The word (moot) is rather a substantive than an adjective, and serves only in composition and I may add apposition, for so I think grammarians term it. A moot-point, a book-case, &c.

What is the title or subject of the ballad cited (p. 11) or where is it to be found?

Doff with your clogs and cockers
And don with your hose and shoon

are the two first lines of an old medley. To *clout* (shoes) is a common expression.

In the *Nugæ Antiquæ,* vol. 2, is a curious account of a visit to Tyrone by sir John Harrington the poet in 1599, written by himself; which may possibly have escaped your researches.

"Rug-headed kerns," in Rich. II. I should take to be merely rough-headed, with their hair matted, knotted and uncombed, as described in pp. 66, 67.

The following passage from Shak. Hen. 5. a. 3. s. 7. is so apposite to your subject in p. 64, that I think you would wish to have recollected it.

"*Dau.* O! then, belike, she (your horse or mistress) was old and gentle; and you rode, *like a kern of Ireland,* your French hose off, and *in your strait trossers.*"

Dr. Hanmer does *not* say that Little John followed his master to Ireland (p. 129). He did not come there till after the latters death. I wish these records in the Southwell family could be inspected.

My excursion to Dublin, was chiefly with a view to pick up songs, either single or collected, the

native production of the country: but I met with little or nothing except disappointment. And yet I have good reason to think that some such collections must either exist or have existed. You will smile when I add that by genuine Irish compositions, I would be understood to mean Murdoch o' Blaney, Paddy Whack, &c., pieces which I suppose you will think do very little honour to the poetical genius of Ierne. The first and best book of the kind, is a collection printed at Dublin about twenty or thirty years ago, under the alliterative title of *Pæans of pleasure*, &c. It is of too indelicate a nature perhaps to have found its way into your study. But I should esteem it a very great obligation were accident to throw it in your way, if you would condescend to gratify my desire to possess it.

I am, sir,
With great respect and sincerity,
Your very faithful humble servant,
J. Ritson.

LXXIII.

To Mr. Harrison.

Dear Sir, Stockton, 20th October, 1789.

I am just upon the moment of my departure, and, as you will easily imagine, have very little time to spare either for thinking or writing, but cannot leave the country without giving you at least a word or two.

A few days after I came from Durham, I observed in one of the Newcastle papers, an advertisement of an English Review of German books, which I fancy you will be glad to take in. Further particulars may doubtless be had at Newcastle, though I cannot at present recollect the booksellers name.

"A young man, just entered on geometry, and gone no farther than the definition of triangles, calls on me: are not you certain, said I to him, that the *three angles of a triangle, are equal to two right angles?* He answers me, that, so far from being certain, he has not a clear idea of the proposition: on which I demonstrate it to him; this, indeed, makes him very certain of it, and he will be so as long as he lives." (Voltaires *Philosophical Dictionary*, p. 67.)

This, you see, is the problem I asked you to demonstrate: perhaps I did not express it in precisely the same terms: but is Voltaire correct?

Finding an old edition of Rabelais in Christophers shop, I beg leave to request your acceptance of it: and with my best respects to Mrs. Harrison and my sincerest wishes for a long continuance of health and happiness to both,

I remain, Dear Sir,
Your most faithful and obliged
friend and servant
J. RITSON.

LXXIV.

To MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 4th November, 1789.

I received your interesting letter of the 4th of September, during my stay in the country, and since my return to town have got the songs you were so kind as to collect for me. I was much vexed that, suspecting the parcel came from a different quarter, I did not open it till after the gentleman was gone, and thereby lost the opportunity of thanking him for the trouble he had

taken. These favours had already laid me under obligations which I know not how to express and which it will be impossible for me to discharge, when yesterdays post brought me the agreeable account of your Welsh tour and visit to Buxton. The satisfaction I feel at even having you in England is indeed diminished by the inducement to your journey, and by my not perceiving London in the route you design for your return; but I shall rejoice to hear that the excursion contributes as much to your health as it is likely to do to your amusement. Buxton has little to recommend it, either in point of situation or of society, but the neighbourhood abounds with the remains of antiquity and the curiosities of nature. Never having been myself at Shrewsbury, I am unfortunately a stranger to the attractions of the Raven Inn. If the clock be as old as Shakspeares time I should have little doubt of its being the identical one he alludes to in the passage you quote; he must have been at Shrewsbury and taken particular notice of it. Lord Mansfield once asked the Mayor, if that were the clock (pointing to it) by which Sir John Falstaff fought his long hour; to which the venerable magistrate gravely replied, he really did not know, as he had not the pleasure of being acquainted with the gentleman.

. The remark you mention is far from an injudicious one; though I prefer Durham and Northumberland to any of the other northern countys with all of which, and particularly with their *vulgar dialect* (as I am afraid you too clearly perceive from my style of writing) I am tolerably well acquainted. Rays book I also know: it is a very trivial performance.

I shall be sorry to have said anything that has induced you to think I have undertaken a publication of Irish songs. It would be the extreme of arrogance in me to attempt a work for which no one can be less qualified. All that I could possibly pretend to do would be only to put down in a book all the pieces of that description I could meet with, of which I confess some of those you have sent me, or that I was already in possession of, have much and singular merit: but my situation is so confined, my opportunities so few and my disadvantages so many, that I shall never be able to obtain a hundredth part of the number persons more favorably circumstanced might do. However I shall not relax in my endeavours to perfect a collection, and shall ever most gratefully acknowledge the assistance I have been, and may be, favoured with by you. The slang songs (which I had picked up in Dublin) are master-pieces in

their way; but I look in vain through the parcel for the excellent ones you promise me on the Regency business.

As a publication of uncommon elegance and poetical merit I have always been, and still am, a warm admirer of Bishop Percys *Reliques*, and though I have been persuaded that he has not on every occasion been so scrupulously attentive to his originals as I think the work required, I shall be very glad to find the idea unfounded, and readily confess that what you have been so obliging as to tell me about the folio Ms. has in a great measure removed my prejudice on that head. The limits of a letter will not permit me to enter fully into the discussion of a question upon which I believe a good deal may be said. In the course of some prefatory matter to a book which ought to have come out two or three years ago, but which I hope to receive and have the pleasure of transmitting to you in a short time,* you will perceive the grounds upon which I have ventured to doubt the authenticity or at least the fidelity of this celebrated publication, ...

J. RITSON.

* Mr. Ritson alludes to his collection of "Ancient Songs." ED.

LXXV.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Grays Inn, 28th November, 1789.

Dear Rowntree,

You were perfectly right in supposing that on seeing your letter to Mr. Weatherall I would advance him the money—at least there would be only one reason why I did not, viz. my not having it to advance. The fact is however that on the mans shewing me the letter, on Tuesday morning last, the moment I dare say after he had received it, I actually paid him two guineas for which his receipt is upon my file. . . .

Wear promised last night to be steady and vote either for myself or any person I may nominate, unless Jack Wilkinson, to whom he says he has engaged himself (which I, for one, do not believe) should be put up by the aristocracy. I sounded Raisbeck, but find we are not to flatter ourselves with any sort of countenance from that quarter. Being half pitchered I took the liberty to tell him that such men as Willy Walton, young Willy Dale and Philip Hodgson were honester fellows and those of whose acquaintance I was more proud

than any member in the corporation. Wear, who was present, did not escape without a rally. In short he cried *peccavi* and as I have already said, promises amendment.

You will do me the justice to believe that I have not heard of the late melancholy change in your situation without concern, and most anxiously wish it may be the only affliction you will experience in the course of a long and happy life.

I am, dear Rowntree,
Your sincerely affectionate friend,
J. RITSON.

LXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR ROWNTREE, Grays Inn, 5th January, 1790.

I must confess that the intelligence you have communicated is not a little mortifying, as instead of the *fifteen* guineas I reckoned upon for my own share, I find I am to content myself with *five*. Did not you tell me you had contrived to eke out the draughts to the length of forty skins? How then

is it that D. should only make them thirty? I cannot pretend to say that the fellow behaves very shabbily in offering twenty guineas, as I do not believe that I should have got any such sum from a London solicitor, who would look upon half a guinea a skin as a most enormous charge. However I certainly shall not presume to advise in the business, but shall leave it entirely to your own discretion. I have had frequent occasion to admire your ingenuity, but if you succeed in persuading this poor devil to part with every penny of his own profits, in stripping him to the skin, in picking him to the bone, Jonathan Wild was a fool to you, that's all. You have my full and free consent to do whatever you please with the fellow, and god send him a good deliverance. But you won't forget to lend me the cash! I suppose, after all, you mean me to say something formal in answer to D's letter: I have therefore added a few words for him on the other side and flatter myself they leave a sufficient opening for the display of your eloquence, &c. I am much obliged to you for the Stockton news.

You will be so good as make my compliments to Mr. D. and tell him that I shall be perfectly satisfied with twenty guineas for preparing Mr. W's draughts, if it be only agreeable to the rule ob-

served by the profession in the North, and what, in short, he would have given to Mr. Hoar.

I am, dear Rowntree,

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON:

LXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Grays Inn, 11th January, 1790.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

The readiness and liberality with which you have far exceeded any hope that I could have entertained of your assistance, demand and have my warmest thanks. Fifty-seven pounds. A brave brag! To be sure the forty days date is not quite so well, but one must not look a gift horse nor I suppose a lent one in the mouth. And so master D. would not take the hint. Well, between you and me this has been a very swindling sort of business. Intend you *above* ten guineas for your trouble! *under* I believe you mean. I really think *five* a very pretty compliment; a good deal more, my master, than you could have made of yourself

in thrice the time. A snug job it was for you, that's the truth on't. But what the devil are you, or were you, or do you look upon yourself to be? You write a prettyish sort of a hand I confess, but as to the rest your man Lawson would have answered my purpose every whit as well. And, like a damn'd fool as I was, what need I have cared whether the draughts were legible or not! Ten guineas! Ten shillings! You ought rather to make up my disappointment from this fellow in return for the conveyancing knowledge you imbibed in the course of the transaction. What! have you no moderation? Will not reason content you?

Whieldon lets you have the new edition of Coke Littleton for the one you sent me, which I have assured him, god knows with what truth, was quite perfect and complete. Tell me if it were not so: you scorn, I know, to take the advantage of any man.

At forty days date you may draw upon me any time after the middle of April. I mean in future to pay more attention to the arrangement of my pecuniary matters than I have hitherto done. With half your œconomy I might at this moment have had a thousand pounds in the funds.

My good Sir, I have hitherto had no account to

keep with you and whether I keep one or not—*that* is a subject upon which I dare venture to say no dispute will ever happen between you and

Dear Rowntree,

Your much obliged and ever faithful,

J. RITSON.

LXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Grays Inn, 25th February, 1790.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

I ought to have noticed your letter of the 3rd instant within a post or two. I suppose the business you wrote about is by this time got into other hands. Nothing could be done with any sort of decency or propriety in the way you mention; so little you see I have profited from being under Mr. Bradley. What a pity it is the old bitch could not keep her wind till the long vacation! Ah, it would have been a pretty business—a very pretty business indeed! I may now exclaim with your friend Jack Grey, "Fare thou weel, honey!" As to your own part however I really think you stand

a tolerably good chance, sooner or later, to do the Count over. In for a penny in for a pound. By heaven, I verily believe if he were only to employ you to draw him up a lease for a year, he would never be able to get out of your clutches as long as he lived. You managed the interview with the address of a master. Old Slangy was a fool to you. By all means accept the invitation to Haughton. Catch the fellow (if possible) when he is sober, and the business is done. But the lord have mercy upon the poor devil.

I don't know how it can be in my power to serve your little friends husband; but I shall be glad to oblige him, if not for his wifes sake, at least for that of his half brother, who is certainly a very honest fellow.

It will give me no little pleasure to see you in town. But I wonder much that settled as you are in a place where you are evidently of very great use both to yourself and to your friends and clients, you should be at all desirous of a change. I do not at the same time mean to dispute the superior advantages you would possess in town were you but half as well known here as you are in Stockton. Nor do I question but there are men in the first line of business who would be right glad of such a partner. The only difficulty is in your

becoming acquainted with each other. I have little opportunity of knowing such situations, but I will make it my business to enquire and will communicate to you any information of consequence. I still think however that you are so very well off at present, though I have the utmost confidence in your talents and activity, you will run some risk in attempting to better yourself.

The Coke Littleton is in sheets; will you have it bound here? Tell me and it shall be sent. But you would have a pretty account to settle with Christopher, were I to observe your directions, and put it into his magazine parcel. Adieu.

Sincerely yours
J. RITSON.

LXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR ROWNTREE, Grays Inn, 14th May, 1790.

You cannot say that I have ever been backward in doing justice to your ingenious contrivances and unremitting assiduity in pursuit of money. I foresaw the success of your design

upon the poor Count, too well concerted, indeed, to give him a chance of eluding it. But I am not yet sufficiently hardened to congratulate you upon an event which affords the immediate prospect of a jail for your client, and the not very distant one of a gallows—or at least a pillory—for yourself. Jonathan Wild was a great man, to be sure; but I would not have you forget that he was hanged at last.

I have accepted and shall pay your bill; which will create a balance in my favour of 9*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* This balance I shall either take when I come down, or (if able) will make it up 25*l.* or 50*l.* in part satisfaction of the principal money, should that be agreeable to you. I wish, to assist in the execution of this project, that you or Wadeson could find a purchaser for those confounded Hartlepool houses. Try what you can do; though I own, you have always been so ready to serve and oblige me, the slightest hint is sufficient from,

Dear Rowntree,

Your perfectly sincere and ever faithful

J. Ritson.

LXXX.

To Mr. Harrison.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, 22d June, 1790.

As I do not imagine I shall be down at your election, I am anxious to avail myself of the opportunity Mr. Wear affords me to acknowledge the receipt of your valuable favour, which I am very much ashamed of myself for having suffered to lay before me so long unanswered. I could indeed offer several apologies for my seeming neglect, but shall content myself to trouble you with one, which is, that I am become so nervous, as they call it, that I have very seldom either resolution or capacity to write the shortest note on the most trivial occasion. Any thing beyond a mere letter of business is attended with so much trouble and difficulty as to make me eagerly lay hold of any trifling pretext to put it off *till the next day*. I could not however for the purpose of discharging my duty to you, have fixed upon a worse in the whole course of the year than the present: the weather is so intolerably hot that I can scarcely hold my pen or see my paper. You must therefore excuse the laboured nothingness

of my epistle: I have neither ideas nor, if I had, words to express them. In short I can hardly make a shift to tell you that I meditate another pedestrian excursion into the north, from which I flatter myself to reap some little benefit; air and exercise being particularly recommended in similar complaints. And indeed if I could but continue in the country long enough I believe I should be infinitely better: though I much doubt whether I should, even there, live for ever.

After so discouraging a preamble you will expect very little intelligence from me upon the movements in the literary world. Indeed you derive more and better from your Magazine, than it would be in my power to communicate were I in ever such good health and spirits. I need use very little ceremony therefore in dropping the subject. But, apropos, as I mention the Magazine, let me request your attention to the two lines from a Beadles Staff in that of last month, which I sent for elucidation, and of which nobody has hitherto known what to make. It is indeed probable that you are one of the number, as I have spoke of them to every one I could meet with.

I was in hopes to have been able long before this to have sent you my two books, which ought

to have been published years ago. But my bookseller was born to plague me.

I inclose you the copy of an old parchment in the Museum, purporting to be an Act of Parliament, of Henry the VIths time, as I conjecture, for making Barnardcastle and Hartlepool part of the County of *York*, which is the rather strange as the latter place is supposed to be within the County of *Northumberland*. I think it a curiosity and *suppose* it has not been printed; but confess I have no great inclination to look over the Fœdera or Parliament Rolls to ascertain the fact. You are at full liberty to communicate the paper to Hutchinson or any other person.

Shall I be right in referring the etymology of *Inglewood* (Forest in Cumberland) which Percy explains by "wood for firing," to *Penrith Beacon*, which is (or at least was formerly) within its limits?

Talk of a scrawl! What am I to say?

With my best compliments to good Mrs. Harrison, I am, dear sir,

Your much obliged and
ever faithful friend and servant
J. RITSON.

LXXXI.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Grays Inn, 23d June, 1790.

Dear Rowntree,

I this morning received your favour of the 20th, and as Wear tells me he will be at Stockton sooner than the post, and probably before you are gone to Durham, I have thought it best to trouble him with this letter.

I am perfectly satisfied with, and indeed much obliged by, the manner in which you communicate Mr. Hoars wishes for my presence at the election. I know you have my interest no less at heart than that of your employer. But how can it have happened that you should *expect me down?* or what reason has Mr. Hoar had for supposing you did? I desired Wear to say in answer to your enquiry, if I meant to come down of my own accord, *that I most certainly had no such intention.* However as your time is precious, I will not waste it by frivolous explanations. Therefore to the point.

It would have been highly inconvenient, if not

altogether improper, to have set out immediately on receipt of your letter. I am nevertheless perfectly desirous, if a single vote can be of consequence, to give mine to Mr. Milbanke, and for that purpose am ready to sacrifice my convenience to my inclination, and come down, *as a freeholder*, in the same way that any other gentleman does: though I shall certainly make it a point to return the moment I have polled. No one, I should think, could expect me to make such a journey at my own expence: nor, if I do come, shall any thing I here say be construed to prevent me from splitting my vote if I see occasion for it in favour of Sir John Eden. Am I right or not?

I am greatly obliged, I confess, to Mr. Hoar for whatever favour it may be he intends me. But at the same time a very little reflection will be sufficient to convince both him and you that it is impossible for me *in any character* to accept it. I beg my compliments to him, and am,

With sincerity and esteem,

Dear Rowntree,

Your friend and well-wisher

J. RITSON.

LXXXII.

To Mr. Walker.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, 25th June, 1790.

I am apprehensive that the very prolix, or rather voluminous, epistle with which I lately violated your pocket and patience, will have thrown considerable damp upon any inclination you might have for continuing the correspondence. Unable to procure my letter a private conveyance, I found myself reduced to the necessity of putting it either into the post or into the fire, and have given you sufficient cause of regret that I made so erroneous a choice.

I had flattered myself with the opportunity of writing in the earlier part of this month by your friend Dr. Beaufort, but on calling some little time ago at his address I found it an empty house full of labourers,* who, of course, could give me no information respecting the object of my enquiry.

I can easily believe that the passage you allude

* An *Englishman*, not *born in Ireland*, may now and then succeed, it seems in making a tolerably good *bull*. Ed.

to in my "Remarks on Shakspeare" is not perfectly intelligible. My meaning was that the language of the folio edition clearly proves the speech to proceed from the *Duke of Exeter*, and not from *Fluellen*, whose name the player-editors have, through ignorance or inadvertency, suffered to remain as the party entering. I know not whether I shall ever have resolution enough to put an edition of this favourite author into the press, as the public will for some time be completely glutted with editions of one kind or other. But you may not be displeased to learn that I have actually begun printing my collection of Scotish Songs, which, if not what I could have wished to make it, promises to be infinitely beyond any thing upon the same plan that has yet appeared in this country.

I have already mentioned the story of one of Mr. Boyds fragments, and have since discovered that another of them is printed under the title of "The Cruel Knight."

The author of the Irish Hunt, whose name, you tell me, you have been in pursuit of, was Mr. St. Leger, son of Sir John St. Leger formerly one of the Barons of the Exchequer: at least it is so said in the Gentlemans Magazine for April.

You see I have lost my old friend Tom Warton

—Well! "I war not with the dead," and shall treat his ashes with the reverence I ought possibly to have bestowed on his person. Unfortunately he is introduced, not always in the most serious or respectful manner, in a work which has been long printed, but which I think my bookseller does not choose to publish till both the editor and all his friends and enemies are buried in oblivion.

The general election, which I suppose is entirely over on your side of the *gutter*, is here in the very zenith of confusion. It affords nothing remarkable however; the usual changes of feasting, drunkenness, bribery, perjury, &c. are every where rung, and fully justify an observation made by somebody or other, that the English, who are only free once in seven years, make such an ill use of their liberty as to be altogether unworthy even of so small a particle of it. A somewhat singular instance, indeed, of patriotism, confidence, or I know not what, is furnished by the conduct of Mr. Horne Tooke (whom you are better acquainted with, perhaps, by his original appellation of Parson Horne, as the warm friend and inveterate enemy of Mr. Wilkes, or as the successful antagonist of the invincible Junius); this gentleman, without a friend to propose or support him, be-

came on the hustings a candidate for Westminster, and has declared his intention to keep the poll open to the latest moment; a resolution from which he is not expected to recede. He neither gives favours nor opens houses, and yet he toward the close of yesterdays poll had actually obtained forty-three votes. To be sure he does not stand the least chance of being elected, but his opposition will, at the worst, serve to ascertain the real number of independent electors, who may be perhaps about one or two in every hundred.

I am, Dear Sir,

With sincerity and respect,

Your much obliged and most

obedient humble servant

J. RITSON.

LXXXIII.

To MR. ROWNTREE.

Grays Inn, 24th July, 1790.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

I shall bring this letter to York myself in the mail coach, and hope it will find you in Stockton, though as Hoar tells me you so lately called on

him in your way to Knaresborough, I shall not be surprised if you are still at that place. I have after a good deal of wavering determined to join the circuit at Durham, where I shall of course be on Tuesday evening. But do not mean to go further than Newcastle whence I shall immediately return to Stockton. If you should not be at Knaresborough I take it for granted I shall see you at Durham. But shall be not a little mortified I assure you if, at the worst, I do not meet you at Stockton. Apropos, I this moment recollect Pye and Haws certificate which obliges me to run to Lincolns Inn—and as I have very little time to spare I must wish you good evening and close my letter.

Sincerely yours
J. RITSON.

LXXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR ROWNTREE, Stockton, August, 1790.

Your valuable favour of the 2d inst. reached me at Newcastle, whence it was no less my inclination than my duty to have answered it—but in

fact a number of little engagements and above all the rakish life I led, afforded me neither leisure, opportunity, nor resolution. I got here last night and find myself very much indisposed, so that if I had ever so strong a desire to meet you and Hoar at Harrowgate, it would be utterly impossible or at least the height of imprudence for me to make such a journey.—Indeed it is at the same time perfectly unnecessary, as Hoar and you are as well able to settle the requisite arrangements as if I had the pleasure of being with you.

I don't doubt that my friend feels and expresses himself on this occasion as he ought, or you could expect or wish him, to do. For my part I shall ever consider your conduct as a very singular instance of the most sincere and disinterested friendship. And do not hesitate to confess that I was, however agreeably, not a little surprised to find that the circumstances which I really thought you might fairly have availed yourself of, to get very handsomely out of the business, had only served to render you more zealous and active in its execution. As to the ways and means by which the money is to be replaced, I take it for granted that if Hoars purchase is not effected, he will instantly return it. If it be, you will make whatever use you please of the name, person, and property of each or either of us.

You need not have been under the least apprehension of my addressing you by so odious a title as *Attorney-at-law*, where you are only following your amusement. I have so little difficulty in styling you *Mr.* or *Esq.* that I am perfectly ready if it will afford you any gratification to give you any title from that of simple knight to Duke of Hartburn. You are just beginning to value a childish distinction which I have learned to be ashamed of.

I am afraid I shall lose the post.—But if you see Hoar, tell him I will endeavour to write to him to-morrow morning.

I am,
Dear Rowntree,
Your much obliged and
sincerely affectionate
J. RITSON.

LXXXV.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Stockton, 20th August, 1790.

Inclosed I send you Tom Whittells book, which, when you have read, you will be pleased to forward

along with my letter, to Mr. Langhorne. You will find the author a very fanciful facetious fellow, and no despicable poet in his way.

I have been so continually indisposed since I came here that unless I should find myself perfectly and I may add unexpectedly well by Sunday, it would be very imprudent for me to be at the Chancery Sittings which unluckily happen the next day. I have wished for you here this week past—we have had tolerably fine weather and every thing has been as calm and still as philosophy or contemplation could require. I am sorry I did not bring you over with me. But if you are for the sport, noise and bustle of the races come and welcome in gods name; Peradventure if you stay till the week before the Sessions I may return with you to Durham.

Did you say you wished to read Hutchinson's Northumberland? I have just got the two vols. for a guinea, and a very dear bargain it is.

With my respects to good Mrs. Harrison, I am,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

LXXXVI.

To Mrs. Mary Ritson.

Dear Cousin, Grays Inn, 27th Oct. 1790.

I assure you it was no little mortification to me that I could not pay your fireside my annual visit this season. I intended it, however, almost to the last, which was the cause of my not writing to you sooner; as certainly if I could have found an agreeable companion or two for a post-chaise I should have made Hackthrop in my way to town. I did not walk it this time: so much the worse....

I fancy I shall be hearing one of these days from John Stephenson about my hopeful tenant, who is not at all sorry, I dare say, that I have omitted my usual call. We shall settle one day.

I hope my cousin Jane improves by the book I sent her—she will now learn to speak her mother tongue with propriety.

I am, Dear Cousin,

Very affectionately yours,

J. Ritson.

LXXXVII.

To Mr. Walker.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, 14th December, 1790.

Your letters give me the greatest pleasure. They abound with anecdote, intelligence, criticism, politeness, and pleasantry; and are in short little magazines or miscellanies of instruction and delight. But I must need say that either the benevolence of your disposition or the warmth of your friendship, leads you too often to compliment me with the imputation of a merit to which I have not the least pretension. There is in fact but one fault which I can at all flatter myself I am free from, and that is an insensibility to the value of your friendship and good opinion.

I have little hope that the nervous complaint I have mentioned myself subject to, and which I suppose has been stealing upon me for years, will give way to medicine. But I shall try your remedies in the Spring. This is no season for a cold bath.

The numerous obligations I am under to you begin to render me ungrateful. Your favours are so various and unmerited that I feel myself at a

loss even to thank you as I ought to do. Let me not however neglect a due acknowledgement for your elegant and valuable little book which I have lately received. The care with which I shall preserve it ought to have been a tribute to your genius, but the inscription on the cover will make it a compliment to my own vanity. I was much pleased to find you had had the resolution to discard the capital I from the middle of a sentence. Nothing can be urged in its favour but the ordinary argument of prejudice against improvement, that it is an innovation. I have sometimes attempted little reforms of this nature, but I find a spirit of ignorance and bigotry so universally prevalent, that I have been compelled as it were to abandon every idea of the sort, though I shall always applaud the man who has courage enough to pluck the Blatant Beast by the beard. Apropos, what is your expectation from Herbert Crofts dictionary? I wish he may have sense and spirit to investigate the principles of orthography, of which Dr. Johnson was totally ignorant. We want a system prodigiously to prevent the fluctuation of the language. You may have perceived what mine is from my two pamphlets on Shakspeare: but it requires to be "sealed a little more," which

however I have very little inclination to do at present.

I have perpetual reason to lament my lapse of memory. I perceive I have confounded *Juliet Grenville,* by Mrs. Brooke, with *Julia de Roubigné,* which I had sufficient occasion to know was written by the author of *the Man of Feeling.* I have no doubt, from what you have observed, that its publication was subsequent to the appearance of "Auld Robin Gray."

As you tell me you are in quest of *the Pigeon,* I beg leave to inclose a copy of it, different in some respect from, and, if I be not mistaken, preferable to the more common one. I likewise request your acceptance of a sort of vulgar play, such as used to be, and may in some parts be still, performed by North-country rustics during the Christmas holidays. It would be a fit companion, I should conceive, for the Irish knight Sir Sopin, and is the only thing of the kind I ever met with or heard of, in print.

I am much obliged to you for the fragment, which is certainly mighty wild and simple, but I suspect it not to be very ancient. One line, for instance,

Whose notes made sad the listening ear,

seems to have been written yesterday. I cannot,

from the mere occurrence of the word *bonny*, venture to pronounce it Scotish.

There is a collection of I know not what sort of poetry in two small duodecimo volumes by one Mozeen: can this be the author of the Irish Hunt? If so I must have been egregiously blind to their merit, and shall make it a point to give them a more attentive perusal. His name I find (from the *Biographia Dramatica)* was William, and he died after 1762. The song is indisputably excellent; and were my book likely to attain a second edition, I would be most thankful for any notes you might be pleased to communicate.*

I never, that I recollect, heard of the novel you mention, but will seize the earliest opportunity of consulting it. Tady Maddens epitaph would be a treasure: but I am ashamed to give the spur to your liberality, which is as active as it is uncommon.

If you should again take the trouble to consult my very inaccurate and inelegant publication, you will find the anecdote you allude to at the foot of the page which contains the song.

* Mr. Walker, in a note accompanying this letter, says, "the Irish Hunt was written by T. Mozeen. It appeared in a *Collection of Miscellaneous Essays* which he published by subscription, in 1762. Chetwood gives an account of Mozeen." Ed.

You will one day have reason to acknowledge that I have some little intimacy with those two popular worthies, *the Friar and the Boy*. The *ballad* however I have never seen, and if it be in print should be glad to have a copy of it.

I confess I had formed suspicions unfavourable to the authenticity of Frennet Hall, which the intimation you give of unpublished stanzas has perfectly removed. But you know that Mr. Pinkerton is neither the first, nor likely to be the last, fabricator of Old Scotish Ballads. I think, upon a reperusal, that the piece has merit, and shall be glad to insert it in my collection (which goes on very slowly indeed); Mr. Boyds additions would therefore be highly agreeable. Perhaps you are sufficiently acquainted with this gentleman to ask whether he knows any thing of the old song quoted by Hume of Godscroft, whom you may not have at hand,

> The countess of Douglas out of her bower she came,
> And loudly there that she did call,
> It is for the lord of Liddisdale
> That I let all these tears downfall.

Or of that alluded to by Verstegan in a curious story:

> 'Bothwell bank thou blumest fair.

I have just dipped far enough into Mr. Malones edition of Shakspeare to find he has not been sparing of his epithets whenever he has occasion to introduce me to the notice of his readers. In fact, I believe I originally gave him some little provocation. But I thought your countrymen had been remarkable rather for the suddenness of their anger than the duration of their malignity. Have the morals of this worthy editor been corrupted by his long residence amongst us?

I find myself possessed of the music to Dr. Austins song. It is said to be old, which I very much doubt. Any anecdote relative to it will be esteemed a favour. I am already indebted to you for the identity of the fair inconstant, and wish you could supply me with the christian name of the jilted lover.

The example of Foulis the printer, in supplying the Glasgow school with valuable paintings, was undoubtedly laudable and worthy of emulation. You are aware, I suppose, that none of those precious originals are now to be fou d in Glasgow; that he brought them to a very unsuccessful market in London, and died on his return of a broken heart. So much for the encouragement of the fine arts in Scotland!

Your friend, Mr. Butler, having sent me word

yesterday that he shall leave town to-morrow morning, I was determined not to lose the opportunity of writing to you; and if you have not so good a letter as either of us could have wished, you have at least as long a one. Indeed I may say with Dogberry that, "if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all on your worship." I am, dear Sir,

with the most perfect sincerity and esteem,
Your much obliged and ever faithful
friend and servant,
J. Ritson.

LXXXVIII.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Dear Rowntree, Grays Inn, 13th April, 1791.

. . . .

Your long and unusual silence, I must confess, gave me some little uneasiness, but it is now over; and as I am really sensible of the many obliging things you have already done for me, and sincerely wish a permanent continuance of the friendship

and familiar intercourse that have so long subsisted between us, and with that view, to avoid every possible occasion of either giving you offence or taking it myself, I beg that my application and all its consequences may be buried in oblivion.

I am, dear Rowntree,
Ever faithfully yours,
J. RITSON.

LXXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR ROWNTREE, Grays Inn, 16th April, 1791.

. . .

You will already have received a letter from me which I now wish had not been sent; as, though I request that my application may be forgot, you must perceive that I have entertained suspicions which I am best pleased to find unfounded and injurious. Your conduct was not, to be sure, what my anxiety and impatience had unreasonably led me to expect it; nor was your short and hasty letter, when it did come, studiously calculated to

remove any ill impressions to which so long a silence on such an occasion might have given rise. But I am most willing to believe that these were no more than false appearances which a gloomy fretfulness in my disposition magnified into clouds that threatened the sun of your friendship with utter darkness, though, the sky being now cleared, I find it to burn as bright as ever. All is, therefore, very well; but as the money would be of infinitely less service to me at present than it would have been at the time I wrote to you, my reputation having actually sustained the slur which I wished to prevent, besides that I have been already supplied with the sum I mentioned (though it proved insufficient) from another quarter, I will not, need not, give you any further trouble on the subject, and am very sorry for that which you have had; being, with great sincerity,

Dear Rowntree,

Your much obliged and ever faithful friend and servant,

J. Ritson.

XC.

To Mr. Walker.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, 14th May, 1791.

I never write to you without feeling myself in the situation of a bankrupt tradesman, making the most pitiful dividend to his principal creditor. You talk of sending me the pebbles of the brook in exchange for the gold of Ophir: you return me the pearls of the Ocean for the mud of the Thames.

I am infinitely obliged by your late numerous and valuable communications. The word "ballad" induced me to think your copy of the *Friar and Boy* something I had not seen: the inclosed publication,* of which I do myself honour in requesting your acceptance, will convince you I am no stranger to the subject.

Your friend Mr. Boyd seems a very ingenious man; it is great pity his translations should be so little known in this country. I shall secure his *Dante* the first time it comes in my way, for in fact I never yet saw it; nor had Mr. Steevens, of

* "Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry." Ed.

whom I was enquiring after it the other day, even heard of the translators name. Your adding that "he has finished a translation of *Ariosto* in the same measure," puzzles me to guess in what kind of verse he writes; as I am so singular enough to think that every translator is bound to adopt the versification of his original, and of course that the species adapted to a translation of Ariosto or Boiardo is not fit for one of Dante. In pursuance of this idea I prefer Harrington or even Huggins to Hoole, and admire exceedingly the little specimen Mr. Hayley has given of a new version of Dante, in the Notes to his *Essay on Epic Poetry*. A translation of Boiardo is certainly much wanted, as no more than his three first cantos ever made its appearance in English, and even those are very badly done and now become extremely rare: but I am apprehensive, as Mr. Boyd is a clergyman, he will be apt to prune his authors luxuriances with too severe a hand, in order to accommodate him to the unnaturally fastidious taste of his English or Irish readers. Every writer should be allowed to say in a foreign language what he has already said in his own. But these are points which it would better become me to submit to your superior judgement.

My collection of Scotish Songs, of which I take

the liberty to inclose you a specimen, goes on so very slowly that I can form no possible idea of its being completed. The *Ballads* will make the last of three divisions; and if I can consistently introduce Mr. Boyds performance, I shall certainly pay it particular attention: but it was not my original design to insert any thing written for the occasion. I take it for granted I may rely on the authenticity of the *five* stanzas communicated by your letter of the 15th of February: though, as Mr. Boyd had already sent you the *first* of them as "the only entire stanza" he had, I confess I was not, for a moment, altogether free from suspicion. "*Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes,*" I dread a Scotchman bringing ancient verse.

Your information that the "Indian Death Song was written by Miss Home now Mrs. Hunter," was perfectly new and interesting; though a friend to whom I mentioned the circumstance, and who knew that she composed the original *air*, seemed inclined to doubt the fact. But as there is a very beautiful Scotish song intitled "The Flower of the Forest," which I have lately seen ascribed to "Miss Home;" I was the rather anxious to get at the truth, and my friend promised to make the enquiry. Mrs. Hunter, it

seems, has an unmarried sister, who, he thinks, is more likely to prove the poetess....

J. RITSON.

XCI.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 23d May, 1791.

It turned out as I suspected,—the gentleman was gone: but I shall keep my parcel ready for the first opportunity that offers itself; though I am afraid it will not happen so soon as I could wish.

On the suggestion of a friend I have been attempting to chronologize the oldest Scotish music and poetry now extant, but have no reason to boast of my success. I beg leave, however, to transmit you my lists, meagre and unsatisfactory as they are in hopes of the augmentations or corrections of your friendly hand. The first is

An attempt to ascertain the chronology of the oldest Scotish Tunes now extant.

1. Hey tuti tati. Said, but upon no sort of authority, and without the slightest

probability, to have been K. Robert Bruces march at the battle of Bannockburn. 1313

2. The day dawis. (But qy. if originally Scotish) . . Before 1500
3. The Flowers of the Forest: a song on the battle of Floddon. . . . 1513
4. The Soutars of Selkirk. Said to have been composed on the same occasion. do.
5. Gaberlunzie Man.
6. Beggers Meal-pokes. Both these songs are said to have been written by K. James V. and (if so) . Before 1540
7. Where Helen lyes. The event on which this song was composed, is said to have happened about . . . 1540
8. O Lusty May with Flora Queen.
9. Cou thou me the rashes green. Popular songs in 1549
10. Bonny Earl of Murray, . . . 1592
11. John come kiss me now. Before 1600
12. Tak your auld cloak about ye. do. do.
13. Waly, waly, up the bank. About 1600
14. Leslies march, ... 1644
15. Care away go thou from me. Before 1666
16. Wo worth the time and eke the place. . . . . do. do.
17. Where art thou Hope. . . do. do.
18. My bailful breast. . . do. do.

19. The Gowans are gay. . before do.
20. O wonder is, suppose, &c. . do. do.
21. How should my feeble body fare. do. do.
22. Come love let's walk, &c. . do. do.
23. In a garden so green. . do. do.
24. Into a mirthful May morning. . do. do.

No evidence, I conclude, can be produced of the existence of any other Scotish tune, now known, prior to the Restoration; nor is any one of the above-mentioned tunes (except Nos. 2 and 9, and those not as Scotish,) to be found noted, either in print or ms. before that period. Upon what foundation then do we talk of the Antiquity of Scotish Music? The other of my conundrums is

A chronological list of the most ancient pieces of Scotish Poetry extant.

1296. Song of four lines on the Siege of Berwick, Ms.
1315. Song of four lines on the Battle of Bannockburn. Often printed.
1337. The Countess of Dunbars mock to the Earl of Salisbury. See Fordun, l. xiii. c. 40.
1375. Barbours Life of Robert Bruce. Printed.
1420. Wintons Chronicle, Ms.*

* Printed in 1795 by David Macpherson, in 2 vol. 8vo. Ed.

1430. Peblis to the Play and the Kings Quair by James I. Printed.
1440. Several quotations in Fordun.
1450. The Psalms in Metre. Ms.
Hollands Poem of the Howlat? Ms.
1460. Blind Harrys Acts of Sir William Wallace. Printed.

Any additions to, or observations upon these scraps will be very acceptable. I could insert a similar scheme of English Poetry; but with that subject you are already familiar. Can you supply me with any thing of this nature upon the Music and Poetry of Ireland? It is unnecessary to say I am at present in search of naked facts. But, undoubtedly, when all those which can be are perfectly ascertained, there will be room for reasoning and conjecture. You are sufficiently acquainted with the wild and unfounded n ons published by Mr. Tytler and others, u the subject of Scotish Music. The charact given of Scotish men by old surly Johnson was, generally speaking, far from unjust. They prefer any thing to truth, when the latter is at all injurious to the national honour: nor are they, as far as I can perceive, very solicitous about it on any occasion. But I am sure you will agree with me that

truth should be preferred to all things and sacrificed to nothing; and that a single fact is worth a hundred conjectures.

I am, Dear Sir,

Sincerely and cordially yours,

J. RITSON.

XCII.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 9th June 1791.

The kind expressions of your obliging favour convey the keenest reproaches for my long and unfriendly, though, to my greater shame, not unusual silence. But, in truth, if I have not had the pen in my hand, I have had the inclination in my heart, and the intention in my head, to write to you, repeatedly, or rather perpetually and constantly, ever since my return to town. That thief of time, Procrastination, and a strong propensity to do nothing are, however, too powerful to be overcome or even withstood by the most virtuous of resolutions, and the most agreeable of employments.

If any thing can communicate health and happiness to me, it is to hear that you enjoy both. I had almost determined not to come into the North this summer; but I am such an epicure that the vegetable luxuries you promise, added to your philosophical conversation and unphilosophical ale, have given the balance a contrary cast, though I cannot say they have made the opposite end kick the beam. My desire to reside for a few weeks at or near Paris has been increasing ever since the Revolution, and is in reality very strong; which you will easily conceive when I give it as a decided opinion that no people ancient or modern was ever so deserving of admiration. But then on the contrary, you know ——. However, I suppose this state of irresolution must be over by next term, and then you *will* know.

I have sent your query to Mr. Nichols with a particular request to have it inserted in this months Magazine; though its own merit will prove a superior recommendation. It is in fact worded with uncommon neatness and precision, and will doubtless attract the notice of many capable of affording the desired information. The arms, I see, are those of *Hodges* of Hanworth in Middlesex, and of London, 1610. You will probably know

whether any of that family had settled in the neighbourhood of Lanchester,

You once gave me an excellent illustration of the passage in *King Lear*. "'Tis a good block;" which I thought I could have remembered and therefore neglected to write it down. If you should ever find a half hour when it would be no trouble or fatigue to express it yourself, I should be glad to have it.

I have never had the good fortune to meet with any German books; though perhaps you are now reading Persian or Coptic.

Did you ever in the course of your deep and extensive literary researches, notice the vulgar language of Scotland in the 11th or 12th century? Do you take the origin and language of the Picts to have been Celtic or Gothic? I can get no satisfactory information upon the subject: I wish you would consider it.

I have just published a most splendid and elegant edition of the History of Tom Thumb and some other works of no less importance, of which I design you a copy the first opportunity. I am over head and ears in the press, and wish myself fairly out of it: as I am conscious I cut a lamentable figure in print when deprived of the benefit of your friendly advice.

I beg my best respects to good Mistress Harrison:—

"If we do meet again why we shall smile,"

Your sincerely affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

XCIII.

To Mr. Walker.

DEAR SIR, Gray's Inn, 29th July, 1791.

It is with the greater pleasure I embrace the opportunity of sending my now antiquated parcel by Mr. Shannon, as I had really begun to despair of meeting with one; the only Irish gentleman I have the honour of knowing having been of no service to me. I ought however to apologise for the obsolete letter it incloses; but in fact I durst not open it lest my disgust should lead me to begin a new one, which my indolence would not suffer me to finish in time.

Looking the other day into Goughs Topography, I found "Longfords Glynn; a true history. Faithfully translated from the Irish original, 1736, fol." a book of which I had never heard. You will be able no doubt to favour me with some account of it.

Pray does Mr. O'Flannagan go on with his trans-

lation of your "Bardic remains?" This is a work I very much wish to see. He will make us amends I trust, for the mawkish enthusiasm of Miss Brooke.

The most curious piece of genuine Irish poetry that I know is, in my opinion, the ancient Highland Duan published by Pinkerton. The old genealogical poems mentioned by O'Flaherty, would perhaps prove equally so: it is a great pity they are not printed. Why will you not favour us with a History of Irish Poetry? It would be vastly interesting; and who is better qualified? For my own part, I often think that if I were some years younger and perfectly independent, I would venture myself among the inhospitable savages of Connaught or Munster, of whom Twiss was so much afraid, in order to acquire their language in its original purity.

Has Colonel Vallancey ever printed or does he ever mean to print his "Irish Historical Library?" This would be a really valuable and useful publication. I can make nothing, however, of his "Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland." He seems to be somewhat in the condition in which Festus (I think it was) supposed Paul; as, if much learning have not made him mad, it has made him, at least, completely ridiculous and absurd.

I have proved so irregular and ungrateful a correspondent that I dare scarcely flatter myself with another letter from you. Indeed, if I did not believe that your generosity kept pace with my want of merit, I should utterly despair.

I am, dear sir,

Ever sincerely yours

J. RITSON.

P. S. The wind instruments alluded to in Othello are not *bagpipes* but *hautboys*. You see where I have been dabbling.

XCIV.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 3d August, 1791.

By favour of our friend Wear, who is so good as to take the charge of this, you will some how or other receive the volume of tracts you were so obliging as to trust me with, and a few German books, which I selected as well as I could from a large number consisting chiefly of hymns and other religious pieces. Some of them, I flatter myself, may be worth your acceptance: there is a volume of love songs with a play, which seems

curious. Apropos, talking of songs, will you permit me to beg the return of the *Kriegslieder*, which you know I never gave you?

You guess by all this that I mean to deprive myself of the pleasure of seeing you this summer! It is even so: I shall set off in a few days for Paris, where I purpose remaining till the end of September; after which it will be too late to think of coming into the North. However, should my situation prove less interesting or satisfactory than I now conceive it, I may return the sooner and stand a better chance of paying you a visit.

As to the Circuit, I sacrifice it without reluctance. I never had reason to expect it would be an object in point of income, and the peculiar habits and modes of existence in which I have thought proper to indulge myself render it much more disagreeable than alluring in any other respect. I only wish it was in my power to relinquish the profession altogether with as little ceremony.

Adieu, my dear and valuable friend! I hope to beat you at chess once more before I die. In the mean time, with my best compliments to good Mrs. Harrison, believe me to be

Most sincerely and affectionately yours

J. RITSON.

XCV.

To Mr. Rowntree.

Gray's Inn, 13th August, 1791.

Dear Rowntree,

Whatever reason I may think I have had for being dissatisfied with any part of your conduct towards me, I cannot but be sensible of the warm and friendly expressions in your last letter, of which I am by no means disposed to question the sincerity. The ease with which you write and the attention you pay to matters of every description, will occasionally lead one to impute your silence and reserve to motives which would not be suspected in a different character. And surely you cannot think it always necessary for your correspondent, in delicate and embarrassing circumstances, to express a formal desire of hearing from you! The time has been, at least, when you did not wait for such an invitation, which was sufficiently implied however, in the two instances in which you seem to have availed yourself of the want of it. But you thought it best, you say, to be silent till we met! And yet I cannot find that you ever gave yourself the trouble to enquire

whether we should meet. It was at least an uncertain event; and after all you cannot but be aware of the awkwardness of personal explanation. Your mysterious silence, perhaps, has not a little contributed to prevent the interview you so "anxiously looked for."

You cannot be at a loss to guess the actual cause of my dissatisfaction, which I think has been already more than sufficiently alluded to. As to Wear, I never gave him the slightest hint of any coolness between us till the night before he set off, when, on requesting the favour to trouble him with the little commission he shewed you, I was under the necessity of accounting for your name not being mentioned in it, or rather indeed for the application itself. He neither expressed a wish to be informed of the particulars, nor in fact was there an opportunity of entering further into the subject. Besides I suspected, though it seems without reason, that he had received intimation of it from yourself.

You will do great injustice to my feelings to suppose that all the uneasiness experienced upon this disagreeable occasion has been confined to yourself. My mind and spirits have sustained a shock of which it will not be easy for me to get the better. I am arrived at a time of life when

the interruption of a much shorter acquaintance than ours is more to be dreaded than any friendship is to be courted; and the confidence that nothing of this kind would ever take place between us has rendered the disappointment inexpressibly severe. What can I say? I shall endeavour to forget every thing that has passed, and to regain the favorable opinion I entertained of your friendship on the 31st of December, 1790. I am not fond of professions and have long ceased to express myself with either advantage or ease. But the intimacy of a dozen years must, I am persuaded, have convinced you of the esteem and sincerity with which I have been, Dear Rowntree,

Your truly faithful and affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

XCVI.

To MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 20th August, 1791.

Mr. Marsdens obliging enquiry after the little packet directed for you, affords me an opportunity of expressing my hopes that you have already received it. I would willingly flatter myself that

something or other I may have either said or omitted will give you occasion to resume your pen. I begin to think it very very long since I had the pleasure of a letter from you.

I purpose setting off in the course of a few days for Paris where I mean to reside till the beginning of October. I shall not fail of paying my respects to the Irish monarch at Versailles, and will use my endeavours to procure a correct drawing of his august person.

Adieu, my dear sir. That health and happiness may ever attend you is the sincere wish of

Yours affectionately

J. RITSON.

XCVII.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 26th November, 1791.

I have been some time upon the look-out for an opportunity of writeing to you; which is not easyly met with at this time of the year, as your winter birds of passage all fly southward. I heared an excellent account of you from Wear, which gave me great pleasure; though, you may be as-

sureed, i would have much rather had the evidence of my own eyes. (You observe, by the way, i am teaching you how to spell.) My neighbour Allan, it seems, did not come the last circuit, so that i am afrayed, Mill-hall would be *raither dowly* in the assize week. I should like very much to know how you go on; what new discoverys you have made, or what strange languagees you have studyed. It is well for you, i cannot help thinking, that i did not come into the North this last vacation: I should most certainly have beat you at chess; and what fatal consequencees might have been produceed by so humiliateing a blow to your hitherto triumphant vanity is a subject for apprehension.

Well, and so, i got to Paris at last; and was highly gratifyed with the whole of my excursion. I admire the French more than ever. They deserveed to be free, and they really are so. You have read their new constitution: can any thing be more admirable? We, who pretend to be free, you know, have no constitution at all. Paris abounds with antiquities, and public monuments, which you would be delighted to see. There are three magnificent libraries; two of which at least, are infinitely beyond either Bodleys or the Museum, both for printed books and manuscripts. When uniteed, as they probablely will be in a little

time, they will form the first collection in the world. All three are open to every one who choosees to go, without previous application or any exceptions. The French read a great deal, and even the common people (such, i mean, as cannot be expected from their poverty to have had a favorable education, for there is now no other distinction of rank,) are better acquainted with their ancient history than the English nobility are with ours. They talk familiarly of *Charlechauve,* and at St. Denis i observeed that all the company, mostly peasants or mechanics, recognizeed with pleasure the portrait of *La Pucelle.* Then, as to modern politics, and the principles of the constitution, one would think that half the people in Paris had no other employment than to study and talk about them. I have seen a fishwoman reading the journal of the National assembly to her neighbour who appeared to listen with all the avidity of Shakspeares blacksmith. You may now consider their government as completely settleed, and a counter-revolution as utterly impossible: They are more than a match for all the slaves in Europe.

I could have got German books enow in Paris; but they are by no means cheap, and i am too ignorant of the language to be sure that either the subject or the composition would be worth your

notice. The incloseed, which looks like a play, i picked up merely to shew that i did not forget you. The French booksellers publish no catalogues, which seems rather extraordinary, as they are very numerous, and many of them have considerable stocks.

Parson Brewster of Greatham, i find, is about to write a history of Stockton. What a pity you are not at his elbow to tell him a few pleasant storys of passed times, such as the legend of old Cockerells beard, the man with six fingers, &c. which would render his book equally instructive and entertaining. Ah! if i had but possessed a vigorous mind, a clear head, and a ready pen, what a clever thing we should have made of it! Talking of historys, i suppose we are to have nothing further from that fellow Hutchinson: We shall therefore lose the most interesting part of his subject. AN ATTORNEY, WHO HAS BUT ONE OBJECT AND THAT IS THE LUCRE OF GAIN, should never be encourageed in attempts of this nature. Does George Allan print any thing now-a-days? I am sorry to hear that the young man has taken so different a turn.

Adieu, my dear sir: if you know any cause or just impediment why words should not be spelled in my way you are to declare it. Ever yours,

J. RITSON.

XCVIII.

To Mr. Wadeson.

Grays Inn, 15th December, 1791.

My good Friend,

The care and pains you had taken in packing up and dispatching my old iron, books and ballads demand and have my warmest thanks. Every thing arrived perfectly safe, except a single volume which had some how or other got a little wet in the corner of one of the small boxes. I suspect that Wear has overlooked something, and beg you will re-examine the desk and drawers. I should have been glad, if on the spot, to have desired your acceptance of a thing or two. There is however the old Stockton race cup left, which I shall expect to hear you occasionally lift to your head, doing it, as Jesus Christ says, "in remembrance of me." The cane with a tuck in it you will present to friend John Sanderson; it is a sort of staff of office to gentlemen in his line, and he is too peaceable and well disposed at the same time to make an ill use of it. The other sticks you will take to yourself; they would have been of greater service I confess some fifteen or sixteen years ago, as it would not be quite the thing for the Chief

Constable of the south-west division of Stockton ward, to be tramping it up and down the country like one of his own vagabonds. There are two or three framed prints in the book closet, and an ancient view of Stockton somewhere else, which I wish you to preserve for me: if I never ask for them, they are your own. And now, having given you so much trouble already, I am about to contrive how I shall give you as much more. As it is highly probable, from my present way of thinking, that I should come no more into the North, or at least neither very soon nor very often, I am inclined to sell the house, and request the favour of you to see it disposed of. It cost me, you know two hundred and eighty five pounds, besides four guineas for a fixture in the best room, and I have laid out upon it, I suppose, some twelve or fifteen pounds; so that I should not conceive myself unreasonable in expecting three hundred pounds. However as you are so much better a judge of these things than I can pretend to be, I shall readily submit to your opinion. Rowntree, who is in possession of the deeds, has a hundred pounds upon it, which he seems to think as much as a prudent man ought to venture. This being determined, the sooner it is done the better. My sister has so frequently expressed a preference for a

single room or two, that I suppose she will be glad to leave the house at any time. I confess I once cherished the vain hope of making Stockton a final retreat:

> There midst my friends to pass my latter days,
> And cheer my evenings with a social blaze.

But in this illusory expectation many things, I might indeed say all things, have conspired to disappoint me. So that I must be content, d'ye see, to die when I can live no longer, let it happen where it may. I would likewise have the bed, chairs, and every thing that belongs to me sold, my sister having furniture enough of her own. Only let me have the other silver spoon and the dozen or half dozen knives and forks, unless she has occasion for them. I suppose it in vain to say anything more about the sale of the Hartlepool houses, which it will be impossible to get rid of otherwise than by giving them away. So much for that.

Well, you have heard that I got into France at last, knowing how long and anxiously I had wished to see it. My sentiments are and ever have been so entirely correspondent to the ruling measures that I had only to rejoice at seeing a theory I had so long admired reduced to practice. I know that you and I do not exactly agree in our political

principles. Your creed, if I mistake not, is that a few men, whether born with boots and spurs or at least who have got them on, have a right to bridle, saddle and harness the rest, and ride or drive them with as much gentleness or violence as they see occasion; and that it is much more advisable for the latter to jog on peaceably and quietly than by kicking or flinging to provoke a larger portion of hard blows and hunger. This I believe is a pretty fair representation. I must however do you the justice to allow that you are an aristocrat of the most moderate description, since I believe you only wish to ride with a single spur and little switch. They order these matters very differently in the country I was speaking of, which, owing to the dissemination and establishment of those sacred and fundamental principles of liberty and equality, enjoys a degree of happiness and prosperity to which it has hitherto been a stranger: but which is merely typical of that to which it will shortly arrive. Now is the time for you to make your fortune by opening a little snug trade between *Stocktor* and *France!* Adieu, and believe me Very sincerely yours

J. Ritson.

XCIX.

To the Same.

Dear Wadeson, Gravs Inn, 17th March, 1792.

I am perfectly ashamed on looking at the date of your very obliging favour, to which I ought to have given an immediate answer. But justice requires that you should impute a good part of the delay to my friend Hoar, who has not thought proper to notice the offer I made to sell him the house, and consequently, I must presume, he will have nothing to do with it. I should have thought your argument, as to the reduced price it is likely to fetch, more conclusive if I had purchased it exactly in the way you state. But, if you will recollect, it was sold by auction, and Rowntree always assured me it was worth the money. Perhaps, however, houses may not be so saleable a commodity as they were a few years since. Be this as it will, I agree with you that it would be best to let the house, till at least as great a fool as myself wants to buy one. But it will never do to split it into tenements, nor do I find that this plan would be agreeable to my sister. If indeed there had been a back way into the yard or garden, I might not have thought it so exceptionable. But,

as it is, she must either quit the house entirely, or if she wish to remain in it must pay a reasonable rent and make of it what she pleases. In the first case I must be content with what you can get me; though I had flattered myself it would be somewhat more than twelve pounds a year. But I plainly see I have given too much for it.

You, my good friend, are a man of feeling: as to my part, it is no longer in the power of Elegy to make me cry, or (which I think much more lamentable) of Epigram to make me laugh. I should, however, without consulting Mr. Shenstone, be very unhappy to lose the friendship of a man I esteemed; but when esteem is once destroyed, what is the value of either the friendship or the man? Rowntree, to be sure, is a very clever as well as a very useful fellow, and was not, perhaps, to blame that I placed more confidence in his sincerity than it was able to bear. One should have some sort of a mental thermometer to ascertain the boiling and freezing points of a mans friendship. At least (to change my metaphor) it would be very important to know "the sticking place" of the machine, lest by screwing too high you break it in pieces, or render it of no further use. My friend Rowntrees zeal might be up to the loan of fifty, or perhaps sixty, or even

seventy pounds, but the mention of a hundred extinguished his fires and converted his hot water into cold ice. I am therefore content to let him freeze. . . .

You decline accepting the cup! Indeed you shall do no such thing: I insist not only upon your immediately taking it, but also upon your swallowing as much ale or porter as it will hold, at a draught, by way of punishment for your disobedience. What! would you have people say that you quarrelled with me for giving you a silver cup! I only wish you would leave it, when you shift your quarters, to some honest fellow who likes a pot of ale in order that it may be kept in the town and properly employed.

Have you seen our friend Langdales *History of North Allerton*? You will hear, perhaps, or suspect that I gave him some little assistance; but he seems to have been beholden to a much cleverer fellow. I dare say you will not think me capable of saying that a structure was pulled down by "illiterate hands." I am particularly sorry that the old Borough does not cut a more respectable figure. You have probably forgot the delicious moments which the idea of this once loved place brings to my recollection. Can you remember, for instance, our drinking gin and water at Apple-

ton Wiske, while you and the weaver sung, "Despairing beside a clear stream?" I never was happier in my life. Ah! my good friend, if we could but turn the clock back! Adieu.

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I send you here a little book,
For you to look upon,
That you may see what I have said
When I am dead and gone.

C.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 24th May, 1792.

I am equally obliged, instructed and entertained by your etymological disquisitions. There is certainly the strangest mixture of ignorance and idleness throughout Johnsons Dictionary that was ever exhibited in such a work. But what do you say to Herbert Croft? He is to correct all Johnsons errors, supply all his defects, and in short, produce the most finished and perfect specimen of lexicography that has ever appeared of any language or in any country. His work, of which I have the pleasure to send you a specimen and

proposals, is to be comprised in four large folio volumes, and little enough too when you consider that he makes a point of inserting not only all the words at present in the language but every word that ever was in it, and also, I suspect, a good many which it was never before acquainted with.

I don't approve your derivation of *leman* from *l'aimant*. Surely, if there be either faith or truth in etymology, it comes immediately from the Saxon leofman. Steevens knows no more of Dutch than he does of Hebrew: he found his etymon in either Junius or Skinner. But the Saxon is the thing, though you choose rather to resort to the German: with as much propriety, I am persuaded, as if a man in order to become acquainted with one country, should think it best to go and reside in another.

Do you ever read Piers Plowman? He has a number of fine old Saxon words, not to be found, it is observable, in any other species of poetry. What is *pudding ale?*

> I bought her barely malte, she brewed it to sell
> Peny ale and *puddyng ale* she poured togethers
> For laborars and lowe folke that lay by it selfe.
> The best ale lay in my boure, or els in my chambre,
> And whoso bummed therof bought it there after,
> A gallon for a grote, god wote no lesse;
> And yet it came in cuhe mele, thys craft she used.

You can brew no such ale as this was; neither so good, nor so cheap.

Whence comes the saying, *Nolo episcopari?* Is there or was there ever any formulary at the election of a Bishop, in which he (or any one for him) is or was to make such an answer? I can find nothing of it in Du Cange.

I will come once more into the North, if it be only to take my leave of you; whether this or the next long vacation, I have not yet determined.

Your observation on K. Lear ('tis a good block) was very different from that in your letter. I thought both that I could have remembered it, and that you had it in writing. *Latten*, I believe, is in many parts a common name for *tin*, which I am positive, is its meaning in the M. W. of W. There is rather more difficulty in *sharded* or *shard born beetle*; as the word *shards* is proved to be used in some passages for cow-dung, tiles, pots, &c. and in others for *wings*. I have still some intention of printing an edition of Shakspeare, in which I shall carefully attend to what you say. I send you a pamphlet in which I flatter myself I have totally demolished the great Mr. Malone. He has attempted to answer it by the most contemptible thing in nature. . . . You also receive another book of my publication; I shall stock you a

library by and by. You will look it over against I see you, and be as hypercritical as you please. I am aware of many blunders, which a new edition only can correct, but which every one will not be so sharp as you in detecting.

I fancy Dr. Wendeborns must be the grammar you want. He is a very sensible man and lately published in German, A View of England in the XVIIIth century which he has since translated into English. Adieu, I must now make up my parcel. 6th June.

Most sincerely yours
J. Ritson.

CI.

To Mr. Thomas Fallowfield.

Worthy friend, Grays Inn, 6th Oct. 1792.

It is very true that King William the Conqueror did about the year 1080 cause a survey to be made of his realm of England called Doomsday-book, which is still preserved in the Exchequer, and has been lately printed by order of Parliament; but it is also true that neither Northumberland, nor Durham, nor Cumberland, and

but a very little of the south-east part of Westmoreland is comprehended within that survey: which, at the same time, as I conceive, would have been of little or no service upon such a question as the present.

With respect to the grant made by King John to Robert de Veteriponte (or Vipont) it must be observed that the manor and lands of Great and Little Strickland could not be comprised therein, inasmuch as they were always reckoned parcel of the barony of Kendal, which belonged to the Lancasters, and not of the barony of Westmoreland, which is the subject of that grant.

You know, I presume, that, in the year 1739, the same question was agitated by the tenants of the Earl of Thanet, within the barony of Westmoreland, and determined in their favour; as I have no doubt this would be in yours, were you able to produce the like evidence.

I perceive, on looking into the History of Westmoreland, that there have been several ancient inquisitions and other legal proceedings touching the customs of several manors within the barony of Kendal; but cannot find that either Great Strickland or Melkinthorpe is included therein: nor does it appear to me that there has ever been any open dispute between the lord and

tenants of these manors touching the quantum of either a general or a particular fine.

On the Appleby trial there were eleven witnesses produced on the part of the tenants whose ages together amounted to 1000 years. The way is therefore (if not too late) to enquire of the oldest men now living, what they either know or have heard as to the assessment of the general fine, since or before this estate came into the Lowther family, who purchased (about 100 years ago) of the Dalstons, to whom it came by marriage from the Fallowfields, who held it for many generations.

It will be impossible, I fear, at this distance of time to procure a brief in the Thanet cause, even if one knew what attorney was concerned for the tenants. The custom, however, of your manor must be proved exactly in the same way, and cannot, I suppose, be ascertained without a trial, which it will certainly be the interest of the tenants to bring forward on the death of this man; and I confess myself much surprised that the step was not taken on the death of one or other of the two last lords, when the success of the Appleby tenants was recent and notorious. . . .

J. Ritson.

CII.

To Alexander Campbell, Esq.

Dear Sir, Grays Inn, October 17th. 1792.

Finding that the sheet of my Scotish Songs which contains *Leslys March* has not been printed off, I take the liberty of sending it to you for such alteration or correction as it may stand in need of. I believe I told you how much puzzled my friend Shield was to adapt the words to the music, which neither he nor I ever saw done before. I left both with Robert Ross, who undertook to arrange them; but, after repeatedly calling for the paper, I was obliged to come away without it. Mr. Cumming, I think, mentioned a man who could sing this song, and possibly you may yourself have heard it. At any rate I shall be glad to know your sentiments, and am only sorry I am not near enough to consult you more frequently.

I have just got Macdonalds Highland tunes, which seem very curious. I expect great pleasure in hearing them played over.

You will be glad to learn that I have lately discovered a genuine Scotish Song upward of 500 years old: but you must not expect it to resemble *Tweedside*, or *Auld Robin Gray*.

I sincerely wish you would commence the execution of your grand project: it will be "the pleasures of imagination realised."

I am, dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours

J. RITSON.

CIII.

To Mr. George Paton.

SIR, Grays Inn, 15th Nov. 1792.

Applying to you without ceremony as a lover and promoter of all literary undertakings, particularly such as are any way connected with your native country, I take the liberty to inclose three printed leaves of an intended publication of Scotish songs, which I shall esteem it a particular favour if you would be pleased to collate carefully with Lord Hyndfords MS. in the Advocates library. It is the only piece which escaped me, when at Edinburgh, and you will easily find it by the first line in the Index.

The other article I trouble you with is a list of words occurring in Scotish songs, most of which I neither understand myself, nor can find explained

in any glossary. All of them, however, are probably familiar to you; and I can rely with confidence on the explanations with which you may be pleased to favour me.

Dr. Farmer not having his copy of Sir David Lindsays Satyres in town, has obligingly promised to send down for it to Cambridge. I shall expect it, of course, in a few days.

The date of your book of godly songs is 1621; Mr. Brand, chaplain to the Duke of Northumberland, has a perfect copy, of which Mr. Chalmers gave me the full title. It is clearly the same edition with yours. I have never heard of a third copy.

I am possessed of a very rare and curious book. It is "The Seuin Seages Translatit out of prois in Scottis meter be Iohne Rolland in Dalkeith. Imprentit at Edinburgh be Iohne Ros, for Henrie Charteris. MDLXXVIII." 8vo. b. l.* There is a later edition mentioned by Ames, but I know no one who has it.

You will oblige me very much by saying whether in the course of your extensive researches you have ever met with any specimen of the vulgar language of Scotland prior to the year

* This volume, on the sale of Mr. Ritsons library, was purchased by the Marquis of Blandford for 30l. 10s. Ed.

1250; or what you think that language was, viz. whether Gaelic or English.

I am, with great respect,
Sir,
Your very obedient humble servant
J. RITSON.

P. S. Do you know any thing of Sir Alexander Halket, who he was, or when he lived or died?

CIV.

To MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR, Grays Inn, 26th Dec. 1792.

Had I imagined the boxes would have been so late of coming, you should have heard from me long ago. They are at length arrived; but I have heard nothing as yet with respect to their contents, which, however, I learn will not turn out that mighty matter that was expected; so that I shall scarcely clear above three or four hundred pounds by the bargain. Bartholomeus, which we valued at four or five guineas, only sells I am told for five-and-twenty shillings, and Buxtorfs Chaldaic Lexicon which *you* estimated so highly, is worth no more than three half crowns. But the greatest disappointment of all is that Egerton has determined upon some account or

other to make no auction this season, which entirely ruins my fine plan of getting some books for nothing by running up others to three times their value. All this, however, is nothing to you: a bargain's a bargain; and I can only add that I am ready to honour your draught for forty-two pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence whenever it comes. What can I say more?

The German grammar sold by Sewell turns out to be the identical one I sent you down; nor, excepting Bachmairs, which certainly does not answer your description, can I find there was ever another printed in London. The Egertons tell me they have enquired after Dr. Wendeborrs View of England in German, without effect; very few books in that language being imported or sold by the foreign booksellers. You should take a trip, I think, to the next Leipsig or Frankfort fair, where you might suit yourself with every thing you have a fancy for. I know I was to send you the song or tune of *Ça ira*, but as it is become high treason either to sing or whistle it, and of course, I presume, misprision of treason, at least, to possess, communicate, or speak of it, you will excuse my breach of promise for the present. If I can pick you up a German book or two, and find a safe hand to trust to, I may possibly venture to stick it in between the leaves.

I transmitted your correction of H. R. D. under a different signature, to the Magazine, but it has not yet made its appearance. It seems very extraordinary that the other should be inserted, after being kept so long. Mr. Gibbon is said to be now employed (at Lausanne) in writing the History of England. For my own part I think he has already written too much, and that his merit would have been more generally acknowledged had he never completed his Decline of the Empire.

I must with shame confess that I have not yet begun the transcript of "Capt. Hodgsons Memoirs," and that it is owing much more to want of inclination, than to want of leisure. However, when I have once resolution to set fairly about it, it shall not be long in hand; and at all events you may depend on the safe return of the original MS. I am, dear Sir,

With sincerity and respect,
Your much obliged friend and servant,
J. RITSON.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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